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THE

MEMOIRS

OF THE LATE

MISS EMMA HUMPHRIES,

OF

FROME, ENGLAND,

WITH

A SERIES OF LETTERS TO YOUNG LADIES,

ON THE

Influence of Religion,

IN THE

FORMATION OF THEIR MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL CHARACTER:

AND

TO PARENTS,

ON THE

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND THE BEREAVEMENT OF THEIR CHILDREN.

BY T. EAST.

BOSTON:
PUBLISHED BY SAMUEL T. ARMSTRONG,
No. 50, Cornhill.

U. Crocker, Printer.
1819.

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PREFACE.

As the Author conceived that a Biographical sketch of Miss Humphries would prove interesting to the junior parts of his own congregation, he drew it up immediately after her decease, and prepared it for publication. On reflection, it struck him that the Memoirs would supply him with a text for a series of addresses to Young Ladies and their Parents. He has now executed his design, and though he is conscious that it is capable of considerable enlargement and improvement, yet he sends it forth in its present state under a firm persuasion that it is calculated to do good.

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Every thing of a controversial nature is cautiously avoided, that it may prove equally acceptable to Christians of different denominations. This is not so much a measure of policy as of principle, for he is aware that a writer who identifies himself with a distinct party, generally secures their influence; but in his estimation the questions which so often agitate the feelings of the Religious world, are of no greater value, in comparison with the essential truths of revelation, than the chaff is to the wheat. His aim has not been to train up advocates for a party, but disciples for Jesus Christ, and to sink, as in some opening chasm, the walls of separation, that those who belong to the same Lord may have fellowship one with another.

Some, probably will censure him for the severity of his remarks on what he terms the Antichristian tendency of the polite literature of the age, and others may imagine he has given to his work a cast and a tone

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too decidedly evangelical. In this case he has only to bear patiently the censures which he may have unintentionally provoked, and to assure those who differ from him in opinion, that he is too powerfully impressed by the immense importance of the peculiar doctrines of the Scripture, to exhibit them in a form less prominent than they appear in the sacred record, or to allow a subtile influence to oppose their tendency, out of respect to the high authority of the celebrated writers who have either designedly or unconsciously employed it.

The Letters which are addressed to Parents demand their serious consideration, not from any intrinsic excellence in the composition, or the arrangement of the thoughts, but from the importance of the subjects on which they treat. The influence of the pulpit and the press, on the public mind, he knows is very great, but he despairs of seeing any general attention manifested, on

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the part of the young, to the momentous truths of religion, till Parents faithfully discharge the duties which devolve on them.

The assistance which he has derived from others, he cheerfully acknowledges, and though he has generally marked the quotations which he has made, yet in some instances modes of expression may be interwoven with his own style, which owe their original construction to some living Author.

His intention has been to promote the present and final happiness of his readers, and he is comparatively indifferent to censure or applause, if this object be accomplished.

Frome, August 26, 1817.

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Memoir

OF

EMMA HUMPHRIES.

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MEMOIR

OF

MISS EMMA HUMPHRIES.

Miss Emma Humphries, the eldest daughter of Mr. William Humphries, of Frome, Somerset, was born on the 3d of July, 1802. From her earliest years she discovered signs of mental superiority, and as she advanced in life they became more conspicuous. Her form was lovely, and her manners were very engaging; but *these* were only superficial qualities, which sometimes shed a transient lustre over the characters of the most worthless. Her prominent excellencies were of a higher order. She possessed a delicate taste, an acute understanding, and a heart susceptible of the tenderest emotions. Soon after my settlement in Frome, she acquired a powerful ascendency over my feelings, and became one of my little favorites. In the parlor, the garden, and some of the adjacent walks,

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amidst the romantic scenery of the country, she has been my amusing companion; and often has the sentiment of the Poet been realized when attending to her inquiries;

> Delightful task! to rear the tender thought,
> To teach the young idea how to shoot,
> To pour the first instruction o'er the mind,
> and plant
> The generous purpose in the glowing breast.

Estimating her future importance in society, I felt very solicitous to impress on her heart, the elementary principles of pure religion. I endeavored to exhibit to her view, the evil of sin, and the entire depravity of her nature. These representations usually produced a fixed solemnity in her countenance; but when the love of Jesus, in expiating human guilt and redeeming the forfeited inheritance, has been the theme of conversation, a joy unspeakable has been apparent, and the sparkling eye would betray the lively interest which this truth excited in her breast. Sometimes I knelt with her at the "throne of mercy," and implored the assistance of the Holy Spirit to enlighten her understanding, and renew her heart. On these occasions she was generally much affected, and would arise from

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her knees expressing an earnest desire that the subject on which we had been speaking, might be resumed. To these moments I now revert with peculiar emotions of delight, and indulge the hope that my endeared companion, though admitted to a nearer access to God, remembers them, as the earliest seasons of her spiritual enjoyments;—as the dawnings of that eternal life, which she now has with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ.

Her attachment to religious exercises was not occasional and transient, "as the morning cloud and early dew that passeth away," or "as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor;" but habitual and permanent. Being placed under the care of my sister, who kept a day school for young Ladies, she would frequently come *much earlier* than the rest of the scholars, that she might join in our family devotions. As she was never *requested* to adopt such a habit, the circumstance may be regarded as evincing the prevailing bent of her mind. That she did not come "*to be seen*," may be fairly presumed, because her natural disposition was too open and ingenuous, to admit the influence of such a motive. In the sanctuary she was reg-

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ular in her attendance, and from the replies which she often made to my questions, it was evident that she was not, *like too many*, an inattentive hearer.

In July 1813, she was removed to Shepton Mallet, and placed under the care of the Misses Weston. Here by her amiable and obliging disposition, she soon won the affection of all; and the progress which she made in her learning, gave great satisfaction to her Parents. Knowing that a change of scene and society often proves injurious to the devotional habits and feelings of the youthful mind, I was apprehensive that her impressions might become less powerful, but on her return home in December, I was happy to find, that she was still anxious to possess a new heart and an interest in the merits of the Redeemer. The continuance of these desires amidst the temptations to levity and amusements, to which in the company of a large number of associates, she must have been exposed, in any place or situation, I considered as a satisfactory evidence that she was under the influence of good principles. Principles, more powerful and operative than the most enlightened convictions of human reason. Princi-

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ples which are too often reprobated, by the ignorant and profane, as the characteristic signs of a mean and deluded fanaticism: but which are the *only security* to virtue and religion, in the time of trial.

During the vacations which she spent at home, I frequently repeated my former method of instruction; and as though I had been conscious of her approaching dissolution, I labored, to the extent of my ability, to strengthen her habits, and to establish her in the faith. Meeting with no resistance, arising either from prejudices, indifference, or aversions, the pleasure I enjoyed was an ample compensation for my exertions, and I anticipated the period, when adorned with "the beauties of holiness," my Pupil would more openly "subscribe with her hand to the God of Jacob." In her the seed of the word met with a favorable soil, and as "the blade had sprung up," it was reasonable to expect "the full corn in the ear." Every circumstance justified it. In her ordinary conversation, and in her epistolary correspondence, there was an habitual reference to a First Cause, a presiding Providence, a day of final

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retribution, accompanied by those allusions to the Savior, which decidedly proved the accuracy of her knowledge, both of his character, and the design of his mission. These references were usually made in her own forms of expression, without any servile imitation of the phraseology of the professing world, which if she had adopted, would have excited a suspicion that she had taken no distinct views of these impressive truths.

In May 1815, she received a letter informing her of the indisposition of a younger sister, in a reply, which she sent to her Mamma, she says, "I am sorry to hear, my dear Mamma, that the baby is so unwell, but I hope she will soon recover, and should she not, I am very well aware that we must bear all trials that God sees fit to exercise us with, as patiently as possible." From this trial she was exempted, but in the space of a few months she was unexpectedly called to prepare for her own departure. She went to School for the last time in the following July, and till the moment she was taken ill, applied herself with great diligence, to her respective engagements. Towards some of the more

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*fashionable accomplishments** of the female character, she discovered a gradual disinclination; preferring those of a more useful nature. Her natural taste pre-disposed her for Music, in which she excelled; "and always," says her governess, "seemed richly compensated for the trouble a difficult piece had given her, in anticipating the pleasure which her Papa and Mamma would have in hearing her play it." This was a motive which operated habitually on her mind, and perhaps, there are but few instances, if any, in which filial attachment was more pure and ardent.

The prospect of returning home at the ensuing recess, afforded her a degree of enjoyment, which no other circumstance could equal, but this gratification was denied her. In October, a fever, termed by the Medical Gentlemen, a *typhus mitior*, began to spread through the town. Miss Weston immediately informed Mr. Humphries of the fact, assuring him that every precaution had been taken to protect the School from its ravages, and if he wished his children to remain, every

* She requested that she might not continue to learn to dance.

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possible attention on her part,* and on the part of the attendant Apothecary and Physician, should be paid to their welfare. The Physician, being on a visit to Frome, was consulted by a Medical Gentleman of respectability, on the propriety of removing them home, but as the disorder prevailed *at Frome*, and *no case of mortality* had occurred (AT THAT TIME) at Shepton, he did not think it advisable. For nearly two months it continued to diffuse its contagious influence in almost every direction, proving fatal to a few, when it apparently relaxed its violence, but before it was entirely checked, it entered the peaceful habitation of the Misses W. and very slightly affected Miss H. No danger was apprehended, but having been very much reduced by a previous indisposition, her constitution became incapable of withstanding it. The unwearied and multiplied efforts of her Medical attendants, who deservedly hold

* Too much praise cannot be given to the Misses W. for the affectionate anxiety which they manifested for Miss H. during the whole of her illness, and I believe that their conduct has excited those emotions of admiration and esteem in the breasts of the bereaved Parents which will not suddenly subside.

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high rank in their profession, were frustrated by Him, "who fixes the bounds of our habitation and appoints the number of our days on earth;" and after languishing for three weeks without having her mental faculties impaired, she

"Clos'd her eyes, and saw her God."

She was reduced to such an extreme state of debility during the progress of her illness, that she could not endure the fatigue of conversation, and though she cheerfully received every expedient which was calculated to afford her relief, yet she expressed no impassioned desire to live. Her Parents visited her several times, and messengers were regularly despatched, to report the state of her complaint. "Being summoned in the middle of the night," says her Father, in a letter which communicated to me the mournful intelligence of her death, "I went; when there, she seemed to revive; we thought that the disorder had turned, and she was getting better. O with what a thankful heart did I bear the tidings home to my wife. The next night another swift messenger arrived with accounts of her approaching departure. This

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I thought would have been a death stroke to me." They went to see her for the last time on the 28th of December. The scene was affecting. They beheld their first born, their lovely Emma, gradually sinking in the arms of death; but they found her resigned. Overwhelmed with sorrow, they retired to wait in solemn suspense, the issue of the most severe affliction that had ever befallen them. On the 29th she grew worse, "the time of her departure was at hand;" the whole family (of the Misses W.) deploring the loss which they were about to sustain, assembled in her room, when her nurse, a pious woman, engaged in prayer. Whilst in this holy exercise, her eyes were fixed, as if she joined in every sentence, her countenance remained calm, and shortly after it was finished, she heaved a gentle sigh and expired.*

Forgive, blest shade! the tributary tear,
That mourns thy exit from a world like this;
Forgive the wish that would have kept thee here,
And stay'd thy progress to the seats of bliss.

* As the author was in London the whole time of Miss H.'s illness, he was denied the melancholy pleasure of attending her in her last moments. He improved her decease on his return, and the concourse of people which attended the service, proved the high estimation in which she was held.

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No more confin'd to grov'ling scenes of night;
No more a tenant pent in mortal clay:
Now should we rather hail thy glorious flight,
And trace thy journey to the realms of day.

In the life of so young a person, there are but few incidents to interest the feelings of a stranger; but on analyzing her character, it will be evident that the principles of religion had acquired and maintained a powerful ascendency over her mind. *When* she first felt the power of divine grace, changing her heart, and producing that attachment to devotional habits, which the generality of young, and even aged, people contemn or neglect; or *through what external medium* that grace was communicated, no one is able to determine. Nor is this absolutely necessary, to prove the reality of the change. As we cannot penetrate the deep recesses of the heart, and see the whole process of that mental operation, which takes place *in all* "who are made new creatures in Christ Jesus;" we must form our opinion from appearances. If the tree produce "good fruit," no one doubts either its vitality or excellence, because he cannot tell when or how the graft began to adhere. Her behavior to her Pa-

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rents, her Teachers, all her associates, and the servants of the family, was exemplary; and the extracts which are selected from her diary,* will convince every candid mind, that her religious knowledge was accurate and extensive.

To persons who treat with comparative indifference, the scriptural statement of the entire and universal depravity of human nature, Miss H. would have appeared innocent and holy. In their estimation, she would have been regarded as having lived under some happy influence, which had effectually preserved her from the moral contagion, which from their own acknowledgments, is so widely diffused over the various tribes and families of Man. But *she knew and felt differently.* The depravity of her heart, though it seldom displayed its existence, either in her temper or deportment, she would frequently deplore. Admitted within the

* The plan of instruction adopted at the Misses W.'s School is deserving of high commendation. The children are expected to compose themes on different subjects, which brings them into an early habit of thinking accurately and connectedly. To this cause may be attributed the interesting reflections, to which Miss H. has given a permanent form; and which are inserted in this Memoir.

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chamber of imagery, she could easily discern the workings of those evil principles, which were concealed from the eye of the most cautious observer, and which she was enabled to keep in subjection by virtue of supernatural strength. "The human heart," she observes, "is naturally wicked, and inclined to sin. We ought to be thankful that God has taught us means by which we may overcome the temptations to vice, so powerful, and which ruin many whose minds are not strong enough to resist them. How necessary it is to be thoroughly acquainted with our own hearts; some people who are really convinced of their weakness, are too proud to confess it, but by praying for assistance, that may be overcome, and an increase of strength bestowed for future good."——"We ought to pray to God to prove our thoughts, and examine our hearts, whether they have any wicked intentions in them; and lead us in a way that will make us happy for ever."—— "All hearts are open to God, and every thing we wish is known to him, therefore how careful we should be to try to please him." The following verse, which so strongly implies the depravity of the heart, and

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breathes such an ardent desire for its renovation, she often sang with a surprising degree of earnestness;

> Do thou convert us, Lord, do thou
> The lustre of thy face display;
> And all the ills we suffer now,
> Like scatter'd clouds shall pass away.

Her views of the evil of sin, from the earliest period of my acquaintance with her, deeply affected her, and as she advanced in life, it is obvious from her own remarks, that they became more clear. "Pride," she observes, "is contemptible, in whatever form it may appear. Some people say that decent pride is proper, but whether it be decent pride, or honorable pride, or whatever sort it may be, it is *pride*, and God will punish most severely those persons who possess it."——"Every time we commit the most trifling sin, we crucify the Savior afresh, and are committing a much greater fault than the Jews did, by mangling his body."

Superstition, of every age, of every clime, and under every form of appearance, rests satisfied with the external homage and obedience of her votaries. If they crowd her temple, subscribe to her creed, present their

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sacrifices on her altars, and cast their wealth into her treasury, she invests them with all the privileges of her communion. How opposite to this is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which treats with comparative indiffence, all forms and rituals, pronounces the most splendid actions defective, and demands the subjection of the heart. The apparent severity of its decisions, and the internal purity which it imperiously requires, too often rouse the indignant passions of man, who after attending the ceremonies of devotion, and practising some of its popular virtues, exclaims, *What more does God require?* WHAT MORE? That you worship him in spirit and in truth. *That your feelings correspond with your character, your confessions, your supplications, and your expressions of praise.* "Some people," Miss H. remarks, "content themselves with the mere form of worshipping God, and say their prayers with their lips, though not with their hearts, but he can discern between those who are religious, and those who pretend to be so, therefore we should strive to serve him with the greatest reverence."

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That any person who professes to receive his religious sentiments from the Scriptures, should presume to approach the Divine presence *without making any direct reference to a "Mediator,"* must excite the astonishment of every one who admits their authority. "Through him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father." "How thankful ought we to be," she observes, "that Jesus Christ died for us, if he had not, we should all have appeared before God as objects of his displeasure, but now he looks upon us as creatures of his most tender Mercy.

It is to be lamented, that the great majority allow pursuits of a trifling nature, and momentary duration, to engross nearly the whole of their attention. What shall we eat? what shall we drink? wherewithal shall we be clothed? are the questions which are usually agitated, but the more important question, "What must I do to be saved?" awakens no corresponding anxiety. This conduct admits of no excuse. "We ought," says Miss H. "every day to be preparing for the next world, for we know that death comes very suddenly, therefore we should be more concerned about the future destination of our

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souls, than to think carelessly of them, and not to drive off such an important task 'till we get old." On another occasion, not many months before her death, she remarks, "We ought to think of religion before old age overtakes us, for if we squander away our time in our youthful days, it is very certain that we shall repent it. Religion is a very delightful employment, and if we *have it while we are young*, it will be our greatest comfort when we become old."

The solemnities of that day, "for which all other days were made," when the Son of man will be seen coming in the clouds of Heaven, with power and great glory, were frequently contemplated by her, and in the few writings which she has left, there are frequent allusions to it. "If," she says, "we do not prepare for the Judgment Day, while we are in this world, we shall be in everlasting torment in the next: for God is no respecter of persons; he will judge all according to their deeds, whether they be good or evil." On another occasion, she remarks, "When we rise again at the Judgment Day, we shall have to give an account to God, of all our actions in this world, whether good

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or bad, and every thing will come to our recollection then, though we may forget it now."

That talents increase our *responsibility*, in proportion to their *number*, is a truth of which it appears she was conscious. She remarks, "Those talents which God bestows on us, he expects will be improved, and not like the foolish man's, hid in a napkin."——"How thankful *poor children* ought to be, that there are *institutions for their benefit. Our gratitude* SHOULD RISE STILL HIGHER when we reflect that *our Parents are not in so indigent a station.*"

Her occasional observations on different species of composition, though they discover no originality of thought, evince her attention to something like accuracy of discrimination: "Biography," she observes, "is a description of the characters of celebrated persons who have distinguished themselves for their piety, their valor, their patriotism, &c. or of persons who have been notorious for their vices."——"There are several sorts of poetry; Lyric, Epic, and Dramatic. Lyric Poetry means that which may be set to music; Epic, that which is composed on heroes; and Dramatic, that which is theatrical."——"I hope

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that every thing I read will be a source of improvement to me."——"Much entertainment blended with utility is derived from reading Biography. Books of moral essays are very amusing, such as the Guardian, Tatler, Spectator, Knox's Essays, &c. but we ought to read them at *proper times*, and not let our minds be so much taken up with them as to forget things of greater consequence."——"We should read the Scriptures with the greatest attention, and not treat them with contempt or indifference, for though other books are very necessary to be read, we should not slight the word of God."

The proverb of our Lord has often been exemplified, "a house divided against itself shall not stand." To witness contentions within the domestic circle, which ought to be as harmonious as the music of the spheres, compels a susceptible mind involuntarily to weep, as when the standard of rebellion was reared in the holy camp, by the hand of Korah and his company. To what cause are these divisions to be attributed? Not unfrequently to the turbulent and refractory disposition of the children. Impatient of control, they withhold that respect to the au-

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thority of their Parents, which reason and scripture unite to enforce. Assuming a right to *dictate* when they ought to *obey*, to *resist* when they ought to *yield*, they break up the peace of the family, and foster in their bosoms a spirit, which proves a scourge to themselves, and a misery to others. From such a disposition, Miss H. was exempt. To please her friends and *especially her Parents*, was one of the greatest gratifications which she enjoyed; and in reading her diary, I have been struck with the motive by which she was actuated. "Duty," she writes, "includes reverence to God, which should be our first consideration; next, submission to our Parents and those who have the care of our education. We cannot pay too great attention to the wishes of our Parents, who are so anxious for success to crown our endeavors. We should take the example of Jesus, who was obedient even to the death of the cross, and was willing to bear all his sufferings with patience and resignation, for the sake of mankind."

Her kindness to inferiors, and the interest which she took in administering to their wants, must not be referred to that instinctive

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and sentimental tenderness which is casual and indiscriminating in its exertions, but to the force of a principle, impelled and regulated by divine authority. When reverting to the necessary distinctions which exist in society, she observes, "When we die, we shall all be buried together, both rich and poor. How wicked it is to be so haughty as to think the poor such despicable creatures; and not worthy to step on the same ground with us; but that is too often the case, God is no respecter of persons, and he cares for all alike, therefore what reason have such frail creatures as we are to make a difference between mankind." Her conduct corresponded with her sentiments. The money which she was allowed at School, was not spent in the usual manner, but was appropriated to the relief of the distressed. When attending to their necessities, she seemed in her element, and if her opportunities had been more numerous, the number of her pensioners would have been proportionably augmented. When spending the last vacation at home, a poor woman applied for assistance; her Papa gave her a piece of money to present to the sufferer. She receiv-

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ed it with mingled emotions of joy and grief —she paused. With a sweetness characteristic of her manners, she said, "I think Papa, it is not enough. Give her more." She succeeded, and ran to the door, feeling the truth of our Lord's observation, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." If her life had been spared, and these principles had "grown with her growth, and strengthened with her strength," the blessing of many ready to perish would have rested on her.

The composure which she felt in prospect of entering the invisible world, was *essentially different from that insensibility* which many have discovered. She was too well acquainted with the Gospel to suppose that persons are admitted indiscriminately into heaven. She knew that "there is no other name, given among men, whereby they can be saved, but the name of Jesus;" and that "without holiness no one can see the Lord." In the days of health, I have observed her turn pale, as her attention has been directed to the awful solemnities of a dying hour, but when the eventful moment came, no gloomy fear sat brooding on her countenance; no expressions

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of alarm escaped her lips. After exemplifying an observation which she made in her diary, November the 12th, "We ought to wait the appointed time that God has set for us with cheerfulness and resignation," she departed in peace, to dwell with beings of a nobler order, and employ her active powers in exercises and services of a more refined and spiritual nature than those with which she had been conversant on earth. Her departure, which increased the joy of the celestial inhabitants, occasioned great lamentation among her bereaved friends, but if her voice could have been heard, she would have said, in strains as sweet as angels use, "Weep not for me," I am ascending to take possession of my undefiled inheritance, and to "see the King in his beauty:" but weep for yourselves and your children, who are still doomed to sojourn in Mesech, and dwell in the tents of Kedar."

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LETTERS

TO

YOUNG LADIES.

ON THE ATTENTION WHICH SHOULD BE PAID TO RELIGIOUS IMPRESSIONS WHEN AT SCHOOL.

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LETTERS TO YOUNG LADIES.

On the Attention which should be paid to Religious Impressions when at School.

LETTER I.

HAVING left home, you find yourself as in a new world. The place, the society, the laws by which it is governed, and the exercises in which you are engaged, appear novel and strange. You are restless, but guard against dissatisfaction. You should reflect on the design which your Parents have in view, in placing you where you are. They wish you to occupy some important and honorable station in life, and circumstances render a preparatory course of instruction absolutely necessary. Your understanding

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must be matured, the dispositions of your heart must be cultivated, and formed into regular habits, and your manners must be polished. Without these attainments, you would not be able to command respect from inferiors, nor associate with your superiors with dignity and ease. Your present discipline is intended for your future advantage, and by *close application* to the different parts of learning, you will, if life be preserved, return at the vacation greatly improved. But you should recollect that it is of *more importance* to "grow in grace" than it is to acquire the most splendid human accomplishments. In your Father's house you have been taught, that the "fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;" and now you are at School you should not forget it. Have not your Parents in the most solemn and affectionate manner entreated you to attend to the exercise of secret prayer; to read the Scriptures with the deepest seriousness; and to cherish those sacred impressions which you have received? Remember the "instruction of thy Father, and forsake not the law of thy Mother, for they shall be an ornament of grace to thy head, and chains about thy neck."

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If you expect to enjoy all the religious advantages in your present situation, which you enjoyed at home, you may be disappointed. Your Governess and her Assistants, may be endowed with the spirit of piety; but some of your companions may be entirely ignorant of its nature, and others may treat it with confirmed indifference. This may excite your astonishment. Having seen it assume such a holy and lovely form, under the paternal roof, and felt its power to a certain extent on your own mind, you may be at a loss to conceive how it is possible for any intelligent being to feel any other emotions than those of reverence or attachment, when it is the subject either of contemplation or conversation. But this surprise will decrease as you become acquainted with their characters. Some, you will soon perceive, have had no pious instructions from their Parents; and others are too volatile in their disposition, to regulate their conduct by the sacred maxims which have been given them. In the midst of such society, you are more likely to receive injury than to do good, as evil communications usually corrupt those who are virtuously disposed. Your religious

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convictions are in danger of being stifled; and without great watchfulness and prayer, the vows which you have uttered in secret will be violated; and when you retire from the place where you have survived the extinction of your devotional feelings, you may go, in the bitterness of your soul.

To prevent these evils, I would advise you to be very particular in the choice of a female companion. On this much of your future happiness depends. Be affable and polite to all; but reserve the ardor of your attachment 'till you have found one, whose taste, whose sentiments, and whose habits are favorable to religion. This will necessarily require much minute observation, on the manners and the dispositions of those around you; and the exercise of no ordinary degree of patience; for whilst minds of an inferior order *soon discover* their real character, those of *sterling worth* are more slow in their developement. When you have found "a kindred spirit," with whom you can take sweet counsel, do not indulge the romantic notion that she is *perfect*, as this will diminish the strength of your affection, when

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may infirmities appear, and may probably dissolve a union of more consequence to your felicity than you are aware.

> ——"'Tis *Friendship* gives the flower
> Of fleeting life its lustre and perfume,
> And we are weeds without it."

If you are so favored as to find one, whose prevailing habits and dispositions are congenial with your own, it will be necessary to observe some degree of caution in your usual deportment towards the rest of your associates, as an exclusive attention to *her* interests, and an unvarying preference of *her* society, may excite a general feeling of dislike against you. And even if you can obtain such a companion, do not imagine like the once "blissful pair," that you live where no danger dwells. Many powerful temptations will assail you, which will require the greatest fortitude to resist. It will be insinuated, that religion will make you *melancholy;* and this insinuation may probably receive some confirmation from the occasional feelings of your own mind. At times "the powers of the world to come" awaken emotions of terror, and produce an awful apprehension respecting your final destiny, unattended by

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these consolatory promises of Mercy, which impart "the joy which is unspeakable." In this state of mental dejection, when fear is the predominant passion, and its corresponding image is impressed on the countenance, the assertion may appear to be founded on experience. But this is an illusion, and if you reflect on the *obvious design* of these sensations, it will instantaneously vanish. In the economy of divine grace, it is wisely ordained, that the *voice of terror* SHALL PRECEDE *the voice of peace.* You must feel the wound before you will apply to the healing virtue of the cross. You must be roused from your spiritual lethargy, to survey the extent of your moral danger, before you will be impelled to propose the question, in comparison with which every other sinks into insignificance, "What must I do to be saved?"

> "Come then, a still small whisper in your ear,
> She has no hope, who never had a fear."

Under these peculiar emotions, in which all personal religion has its origin, but which no spirit can sustain; it may be suggested, that a more cautious and diligent attention to the exercises of secret and public devotion will

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afford relief. But you must guard against a mistake which may turn the means of deliverance into the strong holds of bondage. The mere forms of religion possesses no inherent power to mitigate the sorrows of the heart. They are only the waters of Siloam, whose efficacy depends on the descent of the invisible Agent. They are as "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord," and not the "Messenger of the covenant," healing the sick within the the walls of his sacred temple. They are the sign posts which point to the city of refuge, rather than the city itself.

"No—the cross!
There, and there only,
——————in the power to save;
There no delusive hope invites despair,
No mock'ry meets you, no deseption there;
The spells and charms that blinded you before
All vanish there, and fascinate no more."

Encouraged by the promises of the Gospel, which are adapted to your present state, draw near to the "Mercy seat." In the presence of the "Father," stands the "high Priest of our profession," with the incense and blood, interceding for your acceptance.

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The oppressive load of guilt, which now bows down the spirits, will be removed, the gloomy prospects which futurity opens to your view, will disappear, and your notes of lamentation and woe will be exchanged for the songs of praise. Having felt the influence of pardoning love, you *will be able to refute, from your own experience,* the unjust insinuation, that religion is calculated to make its possessor melancholy. You will be able to prove, that it refines the taste, and presents for its gratification, objects and engagements, more sublime and interesting than any which can be found in this

"Low diurnal sphere."

Another formidable objection is sometimes urged against religion, on account of its disqualifying persons of your rank from associating with the more respectable part of society. But this objection, like the other, will appear on examination, destitute of force. It is true that the Gospel, like the illustrious Redeemer when on earth, descends to the lowest orders, expanding their intellects, elevating their affections, adorning their characters, and diffusing its sacred odors over

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their obscure and lonely retreats. This, to an ingenuous mind, must be a source of peculiar delight rather than a reason why it should be contemned. Is it wise to refuse an admission into heaven, because many of the *poor* are on the road? Will you resolve to relinquish the prospect of future happiness without a sigh, because *they* are likely to attain it? Must He "who feedeth the young ravens when they cry," and supplies the wants of the wild beasts of the forest, consign over to endless misery all *the sons of poverty and woe*, before you will condescend *to* ask for mercy? If in another and better world, you should become the associate of some who were *poor* and *despised* in this, do you suppose that you will feel yourself degraded by their presence? From such a thought you recoil; but you dislike to identify yourself with them whilst here, which it is asserted a profession of religion would require. This, in your opinion, would preclude you from mingling with the more refined and fashionable part of the community, for which your education is preparing you.

That many in the higher circles of life, are not only destitute of religion, but discover a

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peculiar degree of satirical aversion, when it is the subject of allusion or discussion, is a fact, which observation compels one to admit. In their estimation it deserves the same fate as its Author, and though they sometimes condescend to enter the place that is dedicated to his service, and bow when his hallowed name is mentioned; yet they give a decided preference to the exhibitions of the theatre, and would rather amuse themselves with the most insipid and contemptible sports than receive the consecrated emblems of his dying love. That religion should disqualify you from mixing in their company, reflects no discredit on its character; as a glorified spirit, if compelled to assume a human form, would subject himself to no censure, when re-entering the abodes of felicity, for avoiding the touch of an impure hand, whilst sojourning here. Of them, you would say in the language of the Patriarch, "My Soul, come not thou into their secret, unto their assembly mine honor be not thou united." But happily for the moral world, these reflections are not universally applicable. Some are to be found *in all* the ascending orders of society, whose supreme happiness arises from

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their union with religion. They regard the honors, the riches, the pursuits of human ambition and folly, as the mere baubles of children; or as the delusive images which play on the surface of the Maniac's imagination, when compared with the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which God hath reserved for them that love him." With minds qualified to investigate the most abstruse subjects, they are not ashamed to contemplate with enraptured delight, the mysterious events of calvary; capable by the extent of their resources, of indulging themselves in all the luxuries of the age, they yet prefer feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and instructing the ignorant; as gratifications of a more exalted nature. When the Angels of light form a comparative estimate of the real worth of these opposite beings, of which do you suppose they entertain the highest opinion? If they were as in ancient times, to visit this world, whose society would they prefer? Like the Hebrew youth, who contemned the voluptuousness of an Egyptian court, they would "choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God," than partake of the pleasures of the most refined and accomplished sinners. And will

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you consider it a disgrace to associate with *those* to whom *they*, though invisible, are "ministering spirits."

Another objection is sometimes urged against your *immediate attention* to religion. It is said, that your present business, is to attend to your mental and personal improvement, and that a *future time* will be more proper to regard the claims of religion than *the days of youth*. But can you calculate with certainty on years or even months to come? What is your life? Is it not even as "a vapor that appeareth for a little while and then vanisheth away." Perhaps you will reply, "I am young, I see many around me much older than myself, who seem to think that it is yet too soon to attend to religion." But let me beseech you to turn from the living and view those graves in which the remains of some of your relatives and companions are deposited. A short time since, they were as gay and sportive as yourself, and were cheered with the prospect of a long succession of years, but now they are cold and lifeless, for they are numbered with the dead. And is not *your* life equally uncertain? Like the interesting subject of this memoir, you may be called to appear before the "judgment seat,"

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in a sudden and unexpected manner. Are you at home? There the hand of death may seize you, in an hour when you look not for him. Are you at School, pursuing the acquisition of knowledge, and anticipating the return of the recess, when you expect to see the face of your Father? this fond enjoyment you may not realize:

> "Alas! nor Parents more may you behold,
> Nor friends, nor sacred home."

Are you prepared for your departure? Could you, like the lovely Emma, take leave of your relatives without a sigh, and expire without a groan?

At the thought of dying you tremble? Why? Is it nature, paying an involuntary tribute to the value of that life which necessity compels her to resign? or is it the voice of conscience, reminding you of your impenitence and danger? And will you hazard your eternal felicity, on the precarious uncertainty of future years? Suppose that before the projected period arrive, you should be placed before the "dread tribunal," what excuse will you be able to advance, to justify or extenuate your conduct? Can you, like the untutored savage, plead ignorance? No. Like

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the man who appeared at the feast, "without the wedding garment," you will remain "speechless," till forced to retire, when you will *through eternity* deplore the infatuation which prevented you from embracing the present as the "accepted time," the day of salvation.

"Be wise to-day; 'tis madness to defer;
Next day the fatal Precedent will plead;
Thus on, 'till Wisdom is push'd out of Life.
Procrastination is the thief of time;
Year after year it steals, till all are fled,
And to the mercies of a moment leaves
The vast concerns of an eternal scene."

LETTER II.

If the objections which are sometimes advanced to deter you from becoming decidedly pious while young, appear to be destitute of force, and you are impressed with the immense importance of the subject, it will be necessary for you to reflect, that your attention must be habitual to produce any advantageous results. The religious impressions of many, though deep, are often obliterated

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without effecting any material change. A storm of anguish arises within, which in the moment of apparent danger, compels them to cry for deliverance, but when its violence is abated, their terror subsides, and they fall back into their former state of insensibility. They feel acutely, but not permanently. They run to the sanctuary, not as to a place of devotion, but refuge; not to present their offerings of praise on the Altar, but to seize its projecting horns; not to commune with the Savior,

"As friend communicates with friend,"

but to induce him to protect them from the avenging arm of divine Justice. They *know* that religion is the *"one thing needful,"* but they prefer the amusements of the world, and sometimes regret the impossibility of enjoying the consolations of Religion amidst the various recreations to which their prevailing dispositions incline them. Formally to renounce its claims, and relinquish the hope of immortality which it has faintly inspired in their breast, requires a sceptical energy which they do not possess, but to yield to its controlling influence, and regu-

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late the whole of their conduct by its sacred precepts, demands a sacrifice of feeling, which they are not willing to make.

This is a species of religion which an elegant writer* describes as, "Too sincere for hypocrisy, but too transient to be profitable; too superficial to reach the heart, too unproductive to proceed from it. It is slight, but not false. It has discernment enough to distinguish sin, but not firmness enough to oppose it: compunction sufficient to soften the heart, but not vigor sufficient to reform it. It laments when it does wrong, and performs all the functions of repentance of sin except forsaking it. It has every thing of devotion except the stability, and gives every thing to religion except the heart."

You must "*follow on*," if you wish "to *know* the Lord." You must "abstain from the appearance of evil;" watch without intermission; and "pray without ceasing." This sacred exercise is as essential to personal religion, as the foundation, which lies concealed from the eye of the spectator, is to the support of the edifice. Your numerous engagements and the frequent intrusions of your

* Miss Moore.

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companions, during the short intervals of relaxation, may render you incapable of observing any particular hour of the day for the purpose of devotion, but you should embrace the *earliest* you can command; and if necessity oblige you to be short, you should guard against being formal. This exercise should be preceded by reading a portion of the Scripture, or some other devotional book; which will imperceptibly compose the mind, and induce a class of feelings, bearing some resemblance to its holy nature.

To prohibit you from enjoying the innocent recreations of your little lovely circle, is not my intention. They are proper for your health. They unbend the mind, which thus preserves its elasticity and gives a fuller tone to the animal spirits. 'Till your principles have received a fixed and unalterable tendency,' the amusements of the school may appear more interesting than the devotions of the closet; but they will not so effectually promote your happiness. They may exhilarate the spirit, but can they heal its wound? They may beguile the tedious hours of separation from those you love, but can they disarm death of its sting, or prepare you for

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eternal bliss? And even when your principles are fixed, it will be necessary to prevent one engagement from proving injurious to the other. How is this to be done? Only by giving to each its proportionate attention.

The Sabbath will allow your devotional exercise, to be more lengthened than on ordinary occasions. Before you appear amongst the people in public, you should appear before the Lord in private. You should be deeply impressed with the consciousness of your entire dependance on him, for every spiritual blessing. When bowing in his presence, you should pray, that he would prepare you for the solemn and responsible services of his house—that he would enlighten your understanding to discern the importance and the excellence of truth, that he would impress it, in its separate parts, on your memory, and excite in your heart corresponding dispositions. When *there* you should guard against that mental distraction, which is often produced by the multiplied objects which strike the eye; and should listen with profound attention to every sentence which is uttered by the officiating Minister. When you return, if possible, introduce the subject

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which you heard discussed or enforced; not to criticise on the tones, action, or style of the speaker, but to awaken the interest of others to its solemnity and importance. As soon as an opportunity offers, retire into your closet, deplore any inconsistency which you have discovered in your spirit or deportment, and pray that the influence of the service may be felt during the whole of the ensuing week.

Even in this early stage of your christian experience, perhaps you could not adopt a more determined method to give permanency to your pious impressions, than by writing a *Memoir* of yourself. Comparatively few incidents may be worth recording, but the gradual ascendency of divine truth on your heart, is too important to be only casually noticed. To watch its progress, and observe the means which the Holy Spirit employs to increase its power, will bring you into such a habit of self-examination, that the danger of self-deception will be proportionably diminished. Suppose, once or twice in the week, you take an impartial review of your conduct—the principles and dispositions which you have displayed—the motives by which you have

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been governed in the choice of your society, dress, and engagements—the manner in which you have spent your time, especially the Lord's day, and discharged the secret and public exercises of devotion. For what purpose should this review be taken? Not merely to encumber the pages with a detailed account of the places which you have visited, or the company with which you have mingled; but to afford you an opportunity of delineating the character which you have supported. By this expedient you will be able to detect any improprieties of temper which you have manifested, when contradicted or opposed—any compliance which you have rendered to the ensnaring amusements of the gay and frivolous—any exaggerations of which you have been guilty in relating facts—any propensities which you have felt to traduce the reputation or injure the feelings of others. This regular plan of self-inspection will enable you to discover your "easy besetting sin," and by recording the sentence of condemnation, which justice will compel you to pass, you will more deeply impress on your heart a conviction of its evil nature.

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Should you be indulged with any peculiar manifestations of divine love, enkindling the flame of devotion, as when the live coal touched the lips of the holy prophet, it will be proper to notice them. But if such manifestations are withheld, if you are permitted to attend the diversified means of grace, without enjoying their consoling power, do not hastily conclude that you "are in the gall of bitterness;" but endeavor to ascertain if your moral improvement does not render their suspension necessary. Very strong emotions of spiritual delight, if not accompanied by affecting views of your own depravity and unworthiness, will imperceptibly inflate the mind with pride and a high degree of self-complacency; and perhaps you are never in more imminent danger, than after such a season of elevated feeling. Hence it is of importance to observe *the influence* which all religious enjoyments assume over the general *frame* of the mind. This is "trying the spirits, whether they be of God."

As your religious character will owe its peculiar complexion to the books which you read, and the sermons which you hear, it will be very conducive to your improve-

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ment, to insert in your diary, the passages which strike you with more than usual force, that you may, when the emotion has subsided, examine them, to see if they accord with the general sentiments of the Scriptures. This practice will not only impress on your memory, beautiful and appropriate forms of expression, but will accustom you to such an accuracy in your judgment, as will effectually guard you against even the most subtle approaches of error.

Considering the influence which the opinions, the habits, the pursuits, and the conversations of others have over the mind, you cannot render a more essential service to yourself, than by recording its prevailing tendency, after you leave their society. This will be marking the precise effect which each individual produces. This will enable you to place each individual in her proper class; and to decide, with the greatest precision, on the comparative worth of different associates. By such a method you will know how to prepare yourself, either to resist or receive an influence to which circumstances may expose you.

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If you should be preserved to an advanced period of life, such a Memoir will yield you a degree of enjoyment, of which you can now form no conception; but like the roll of the Apocalypse, it should be inaccessible to every human eye; or you will be under a powerful temptation, either of exaggerating in your statements and descriptions, or of suppressing some of the most eventful facts and impressions of your religious history.

To suppose it possible for you to acquire such fixed habits of piety as those which have been recommended, without exposing yourself to the occasional satire of those who treat religion in every form with contempt, would be romantic. The human heart, when unrestrained by divine grace, uniformly discovers its positive aversion "to the things of the spirit." This aversion is coeval with its capacity for discernment and feeling. It exudes its venom as early as circumstances will permit. If you expect to avoid its influence, by concealing your religious attachments, and comply with *customs*, which *conscience imperiously condemns;* you will sacrifice your peace without accomplishing your object.

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Be decided. Whilst the modesty which accompanies genuine religion, keeps you from making an ostentatious display, do not discover an unwillingness to be regarded as a disciple of the Redeemer. Is this a disgrace? No. It is the noblest badge of distinction which you can wear. It confers honor on hoary hairs; but on *you* it will sit with peculiar grace. The lines of beauty may be drawn on your countenance, and the fire of genius may sparkle in your eye; but these are fading ornaments; it is union with the Savior which stamps dignity on the character, and imparts to every excellence a lustre which will shine brighter and stronger till the perfect day.

Such a decided habit, when formed, will conduce to the tranquillity of your mind, and give you a powerful ascendency over the minds of your associates. If they perceive that your inflexible attachment to religion is attended with gentleness of manners, and sweetness of disposition, their dislike to your seriousness will gradually decrease; and they will be compelled to respect the *person*, whose principles they secretly despise. This decis-

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ion, will invest your character, with a high degree of sanctity, in their opinion, and create an awe about you,

"As a guard Angelic placed."

On your return from School, your Parents will embrace you with strong emotions of pleasure, if in addition to your personal and mental accomplishments, they trace in you the lovely image of the Redeemer. No longer alarmed, by the possibility of an impassable gulf, separating you from their society in a future world, they will partake of the joy which Angels felt, on your first repentance, and receive you as alive from the dead. Your presence at the family altar, will enliven their devotions; and your mutual intercourse within the domestic circle will diffuse a fragrance more sweet than

"The breath of morn."

Here, as many will be observing your conduct, it will be necessary for you to act with the greatest circumspection. It is not unlikely but some of your former associates may solicit your company. To refuse their requests would operate against you, by inducing them to suppose, that your *new nations*

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(as they would term your religious principles,) had made you proud; but as you have a *new character* to support, suffer no levity of disposition, no improper compliances, respecting amusements, or recreations, to tarnish its glory. Carry with you the cheerful, yet dignified spirit of your profession; and endeavor to blend instruction with the gratification which you may impart or receive, that the influence of your character may be *felt*, when you are absent.

But to spend the whole of your time, during the recess, in paying and receiving visits, would be improper. It would prove injurious to the tone and vigor of your devotional feelings; and by relaxing your attention to the moral culture of the heart, would admit the growth of habits, which you will find more easy to prevent than destroy.

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LETTERS

TO

YOUNG LADIES.

ON THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION IN THE FORMATION OF THE MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL CHARACTER.

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LETTERS TO YOUNG LADIES.

On the Influence of Religion in the Formation of the Moral and Intellectual Character.

LETTER I.

It may not be necessary to adduce a variety of arguments to prove that the heart of man is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." The fact is generally admitted, on the authority of the Scriptures, and the concurrent testimony which the history of all nations supplies. Its depravity assumes diversified forms and modifications, according to his age, his dispositions, and the situation which he occupies. The ascendency which it acquires over his mind, is often so gradual, that many are not conscious of its

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existence, till they are under its dominion. The impetuous youth, who destroys the peace of his family, and the accomplished villain, who glories in his shame, would *once* have trembled at the crimes, which they can now commit without remorse. But such triumphs of impiety, you suppose, are rare; being reserved only for the more dissolute and abandoned.

In *your* opinion, the delicacy of your feelings, the high estimate which you have formed of the female character, the restraints which are imposed on you by custom; will effectually guard you against the force of temptations which have called forth the depraved dispositions of the opposite sex. The treachery of Absalom, who first stole the hearts of the men of Israel, and then drove his Father from his throne and his capital; the deliberate cruelty of Manasseh, who made the streets of Jerusalem to run down with blood; the perfidy of Judas Iscariot, who betrayed his Lord and Master for thirty pieces of silver; are moral qualities which probably you may imagine no female is capable of displaying. But does not the page of ancient and modern times record the

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names of some of *your own sex*, who have attained to a fatal pre-eminence in vice? some, whose personal charms have excited the admiration of the world; whose mental endowments have qualified them to associate with the first class of intellectual beings; but whose crimes have rendered them a disgrace to society. The vindictive spirit of a Jezebel; the boundless ambition of a Cleopatra; the relentless malice of an Herodias; the profligate maners of a Wolstonecraft and a Hamilton; awaken the indignant horror of your comparatively innocent mind; but do they not decisively prove that *your* nature is depraved in common with *ours?* Do they not stand amidst the ruins of their reputation, as beacons to *warn* us of *our mutual danger?*

But as you have hitherto escaped the "corruption that is in the world," and see many excellencies adorning your character, you may conclude, that no change of circumstances would produce a change in your habits or propensities. But you forget that *your* heart is "*deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.*" That under the most specious appearances of virtue, it retains within it,

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every evil principle which has been displayed on the great theatre of the world.

That such an assertion should be repelled as a libellous attack on the *goodness of your heart* is perfectly natural, because you feel no inclination to degrade your own character, or injure the reputation of another. But a principle may lay dormant for a long time, like the seed of the husbandman during the unprolific months of winter, which a new series of events may rouse into powerful action. A more intimate acquaintance with the moral qualities of others, may induce you to *suspect* that your nature is *not so good* as you have imagined: and a minute investigation of your own heart may *convince* you, that it is *deceitful* and *impure*.

Ambition, pride, revenge, cruelty, envy, and contempt of God, are the dispositions which human nature uniformly displays. These dispositions may not have assumed in your character those awful forms in which they have sometimes appeared in the character of others; but have you never discovered their secret influence? If your ambition has never subverted an empire, or turned the fruitful field into a barren wilderness, has it

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never disturbed the order of a family, by aspiring to the honor of command or dictation, when duty requires you to obey or submit? If your pride has never prompted you to say to another, "Stand by thyself, come not near to me: for I am holier than thou;" yet have you never felt its operations, when comparing the elegance of your person or the splendor of your accomplishments, with the appearance and attainments of others? If like the Spaniard,* you have never pursued your enemy, from one place to another, 'till revenge has enjoyed the sweet though deadly repast; yet have you never retained a recol-

* Revenge has produced wonderful examples of unremitting constancy to a purpose. You may have read a real instance of a Spaniard, who, being injured by another inhabitant of the same town, resolved to destroy him: the other was apprised of this, and removed with the utmost secresy, as he thought, to another town at a considerable distance, where however he had not been more than a day or two, before he found that his enemy was arrived there. He removed in the same manner to several parts of the kingdom, remote from each other; but in every place he quickly perceived that his deadly pursuer was near him. At last he went to South America, where he had enjoyed his security but a very short time, before his unrelenting enemy came up with him and effected his purpose.

Forster's Essays.

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lection of an offence till a retaliation has been inflicted? The cruelty* which enters the defenceless habitation of the poor African, which drags him from his family, his home, the sepulchre of his fathers, and the land of his nativity; which transports him to a foreign soil, where whilst weeping over the remembrance

"Of joys departed not to return,"

he is exposed to the lash of the merciless taskmaster, may excite your abhorrence; but has no dependant servant, no sportive companion, no aged matron, been tortured by the sallies of your wit, or the unkindness of your temper? If under the influence of that envy,

"Which sickens
At the excellence it cannot reach,"

you have never wantonly attacked the character of a friend or an enemy; yet have you

* "The spring time of our years
Is soon dishonor'd and defil'd in most
By budding ills that ask a prudent hand
To check them. But alas! none sooner shoot,
If unrestrained, into luxuriant growth,
Than cruelty, most devilish of them all."

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never by insinuation, or by withholding just praise, injured her reputation in the opinion of others? Contempt of God is not confined to an open and positive rejection of the great scheme of Mercy which is revealed in the Scriptures; but is often discovered in those aversions which are manifested to the private exercises of devotion. And have you never preferred the amusements of the world to the pleasure of holding communion with him? Have you never done what you knew he has forbidden; and omitted what you knew he has commanded?

These principles, which you may discover on close examination, are the malignant qualities of human nature in an infantile state; weak, yet active; and if they are allowed to grow by indulgence, they will acquire absolute dominion over the mind. They may be controlled by the force of example, or a temper naturally mild and amiable; but their subjection will require the co-operation of a divine power.

On the entire depravity of the heart, the whole system of redemption is founded; and the first practical design to be accomplished, is its renovation. These facts cannot be too

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deeply impressed on your mind, because until they are admitted, you will neither understand the truths of the Scripture, nor feel their efficacy. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," is the language which Jesus Christ addressed to Nicodemus; and it is equally applicable to you. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new," is the declaration of the Apostle—"Thus saith Jehovah." "I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh; that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances and do them." These figurative expressions are intended to convince you of the necessity of a radical change in the moral exercise of all your mental faculties. The understanding, which is involved in "darkness," must be enlightened, that you may discern the evil of sin, and the adaptation of the various parts of revealed truth to your spiritual condition. The affections, which are earthly, must be refined, that they may be "set on things above." The will, which is prone to evil,

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must receive a new bias, that it may, "seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." The inferior passions must be brought into subjection to the authority of Christ.

Till you possess this new spirit, the peculiar glories of the gospel will lie as concealed from your eye, as the beauties of the rainbow from him who is born blind. The cold and impenetrable heart of stone must be removed, and the warm and susceptible heart of flesh must be given, before you can partake of those enraptured feelings with which the renewed man contemplates the wonders of redemption, and anticipates that state of unsullied bliss to which he is aspiring. To assume a form of religion till this its power has been felt, would be as absurd and as useless as to paint a breathless corpse and array it in the attire of the living.

But *by whom* is this internal change to be effected? By the force of reasoning, the Ministers of the temple may shed some rays of light on your understandings; by the power of persuasion, they may induce within you some transient desires after the "pleasant things of Zion;" but to reach the heart, to reduce the discordant passions of that moral

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chaos to a regular order, to breathe into your soul the breath of life, and to create you anew in Christ Jesus; requires the exertion of a supernatural agency, "*I* will give a new heart, saith the Lord."

This truth which makes such a prominent appearance in the system of the Scriptures, has sometimes been employed to discourage the use of the means, and to render all personal exertions absolutely useless and improper. But he who has said, "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you;" has also said, "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."

The most sagacious discernment may not be able accurately to trace the precise point where diligence and dependance unite; or to show how they are interwoven in the whole course of our moral obligation; but of their connexion we have the strongest and most impressive proofs. To cleanse Naaman from his leprosy was the exclusive province of Jehovah; but he was first commanded to wash himself seven times in Jordan, "Then went he down and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh came again like the

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flesh of a little child, and he was clean." Our Lord anointed the eyes of the blind man with clay, and "said unto him, go, wash in the pool of Siloam. He went his way therefore and washed and came seeing." To "mortify the deeds of the body," is an essential part of the Christian's duty; but this can be performed only by the assistance of "the Spirit." This connexion between the *use of the means*, and a *dependance on supernatural agency*, is preserved unbroken in all the diversified arrangements of infinite wisdom.

Feeling your inability to renew your own heart, you will either remain in a state of morbid indifference, respecting your experience of a transforming power, which you never invoke; or after a few unsuccessful struggles you will sink in hopeless despair; unless you take a clear view, first of your obligation, and then of your encouragement. "If you being evil know how to give good gifts; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." "Ask, and it shall be given you." Does not such language animate you? Does it not represent "the grace of the promise" as more than adequate to the duty which is enjoined?

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This accurate perception of the inseparable union between your diligence and dependance will lead you to despise the modern clamour which is too often raised, against the utility and necessity of "working out your own salvation with fear and trembling; conscious, at the same time "that it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

LETTER II.

When this important change, to which you have been referred, is actually effected; it will be apparent, not only to yourself, but to others. The language which the Apostle uses is beautifully descriptive. "Who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." The impenetrable veil which once concealed the truths of the Scriptures will be drawn aside, and they will arise before you in their native purity and grandeur. They will not remain as in former

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years, mere speculative truths occasionally depressing the mind by their awful solemnity, but truths divested of every form of terror, inspiring the most sacred emotions of joy.

The dignity of the Redeemer's person, his amazing condescension in "making himself of no reputation;" his unparalleled sufferings in Gethsemane and on the Cross; his exaltation to the right hand of the Father, his intercessory pleas on your behalf, will appear in such a different aspect, that you will be surprised at your former blindness, and the insensibility of the multitude around you. In the efficacy of his blood you will find relief from the anguish of guilt; and in the perfection of his righteousness, a robe which like the vestment of the Jewish Priest is intended for beauty and honor.

The closet and the sanctuary will mutually exhibit new visions of glory. The formal devotions of the one will be succeeded by the impassioned eloquence of holy grief, when reverting to the moral state of the heart; and of devout gratitude, when contemplating the amazing display of unmerited grace, which your renovation will exemplify. The listless inattention of the other will yield to the most

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ardent interest in its delightful services, and you will often say of the place which you once found

"Drear as the mansions of the dead."

"This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

To conceal this change of sentiment and feeling, might be possible if you dwelt in the lonely retreats of humble life;

"As many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear;
As many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its fragrance in the desert air;"

so many whose characters are adorned with the graces of religion, lie hidden in the obscurity of their station. But you occupy an eminence, and though you may wish to suppress the fact of your conversion, till you have ascertained its reality, yet if in the cleft of the rock you commune with the Holy One, the celestial influence shining on your countenance and imbuing your spirit, will betray the secret.

One of the first signs will be the choice of your society. To associate with those who spend their time in trifling amusements, or

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in paying and receiving fashionable visits, would afford you no real enjoyment. The subjects of conversation which usually engross the attention of persons of this description, would excite your disgust rather than awaken any strong mental interest. You would feel in their company, as a stranger feels in a strange land, restless and dissatisfied, because amongst a strange people. To you the house of prayer would present more attractions than the ball-room, and to hold fellowship with those whose fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, you would cheerfully retire from the gayest circle that the genius of fashion ever formed.

To remain neutral in the great cause which divides the affections and interests of men, and which as with a prophetic seal marks their final destiny, will appear on reflection highly criminal. From an aversion to meet the public eye, or a secret dread of becoming "a cast-away," you may for a season hesitate to make an open profession of your attachment to the Redeemer, but this hesitancy must not continue the permanent feeling of your mind. You must respect those obligations which rise out of your new state. What

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are they? To identify your name, your influence, your wealth, your example, with the cause of the Redeemer; esteeming it a greater honor than to stand in visible alliance with coronets or mitres, sceptres or crowns.

The too general practice of the young in absenting themselves from the ordinance of the Lord's Supper must be avoided by you. The participation of this ordinance, we admit, is not essential to salvation; but if you uniformly neglect it, you withhold from the Church and from the Savior one proof of your attachment to him. "If you love me, keep my commandments;" and does he not, pointing to his disciples, when commemorating his dying love, thus address you, "This do in remembrance of me?" and will you retire at the close of the service, with "the mixed multitude;" virtually proclaiming as you pass the table, that you have no inheritance in the Son of Jesse?

> "All things are ready; come away,
> Nor weak excuses frame:
> Press to your station at the feast,
> And bless the Founder's name."

Such a course of decided piety will make you conspicuous in proportion to the splendor of

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your accomplishments, and the elevation of your rank. To compare you to the glow-worm which emits a feeble though distinct light, beneath some obscure shade, would be improper; "You are the light of the world. As a city set on a hill, you cannot be hid." Your gay acquaintance, ignorant of the peace which you enjoy, will conclude that fixed melancholy must be the inevitable consequence of your singular preference and decision. On you the refutation of this general yet mistaken opinion will devolve. Whilst in your occasional intercourse with them you avoid that levity which wounds the delicate feelings of undissembled piety, and that moroseness which sits brooding on the countenance of a disappointed mind; display an animated yet sedate cheerfulness, which will ennoble your character in their estimation and convince them that

> "Religion never was design'd
> To make our pleasures less."

By entering too ardently into the peculiar forms and modes, and sentiments of a party, by adopting too rigidly their phraseology, by resting satisfied with their circumscribed

views, many females have injured their dispositions, tinged their characters with the dark shades of human infirmities, and contracted the range of their moral influence. This propensity you should cautiously resist. To continue unsettled in opinion, even on the minor differences which divide the professing world, would be improper; but to invest those differences with that importance, to give to them that order of attachment, that prominence in discussion, which belongs exclusively to the essential truths of Revelation, would be to display a mean and bigoted spirit; and the injury which your devotional habits would sustain, would be a sacrifice for which no triumph of party feelings could compensate. When associating with those of a different communion, to make either a covert or direct attack on their peculiarities of sentiment, would be to sound the trumpet of contest, and you might mutually retire irritated and wounded, to deplore in secret the imperfections to which your nature is subject.

No virtue sheds so much lustre on the character of a Christian as humility, yet perhaps no virtue is more misunderstood. The affected gravity which some occasionally

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assume, and the strong expressions which they use when speaking of their defects, must excite disgust and abhorrence in a mind imbued with the pure genius of the Gospel. The character of this humility, on inspection, is easily detected. It is generally supported by a spirit which is impatient of the slightest contradiction; and if you could penetrate the secret recess of its existence, you would see it writhing with anguish, when that admiration and applause are withheld on which its vitality and energy depend.

This quality of the Christian character, which contracts or expands according to the temperature of the mind, is uniformly attended by extensive and impressive views of the evil of sin, and of the numerous imperfections which are displayed in all our spiritual exercises and relative engagements. Her language in the closet is on record: "Wo is me, for I am undone, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Her attitude in the temple, is exhibited in the Publican, who, "standing afar off would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." In company, she is re-

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served, being more "ready to hear" than to offer the sacrifice of folly. Of the infirmities of others she is very tender, rather disposed to cover them with her mantle, than expose them to public view, conscious that an equal number lie within her own heart. Sometimes, to stimulate others, she will step forth and prepare the way for the procession of benevolence, but her usual residence is behind the scene. Her visits are indeed "the visits of mercy," for she walks the hospitals of the sick, without receiving any fee, except the gratification of alleviating their pain. Detesting the ostentation of the Pharisee, who loves to be seen, she sends relief to the poor man's table, by an agent, who when asked her name, says, "Why askest thou thus, seeing it is a secret?" The efforts which she employs to conceal her beauties render her more lovely, and excite within us those ardent desires to enjoy her society, which the Father of mankind is represented to have felt on the first interview with his incomparable Eve. Captivated by the brilliancy of her charms, he is still more susceptible of the delicacy which prompted her to shun his observation. His exquisite description of her

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amiable reserve is equally appropriate to the Grace which has been recommended,

> "Not obvious, not obtrusive, but retir'd
> The more desirable."

The operations of this principle will be felt, when forming a comparative estimate of your talents, of your attainments as a Christian, and the returns of gratitude which you have made to him from whom you have received all that you possess. If you are endowed with superior talents, instead of exulting in the possession, and looking with a disdainful eye on others, you will be abased in the divine presence, because they have not been exerted with an ardor and to an extent corresponding with your obligations. The efforts which some employ, to display their wit and their learning, the dexterity with which they contrive to make themselves the Heroines of their own narratives, the prominence which they give to all their individual exertions in the cause of benevolence, will excite your disgust, and turning aside you will pray to be delivered "from pride and vain glory." If your talents are of an humbler order, instead of repining on account of

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their inferiority, and refusing to work in the vineyard because you are not qualified to fill the most important stations, you will be anxious to improve them to the utmost of your ability; knowing that he who had multiplied his two talents to four, received the same marks of approbation from his Lord, as his more richly endowed fellow-servant.

When reverting to your attainments as a Christian, you will be conscious that your improvement has not been in proportion to your advantages. On comparing yourself with others who are your juniors in profession, you will be compelled in many instances to admit, that they have surpassed you. Their love to him, who "loved and died," will appear more ardent, their zeal more regular, their knowledge of the great scheme of redemption more extensive, and the general frame of their mind, more spiritual than your own. The oftener you compare yourself with what you ought to be, the more deeply will you be impressed with the consciousness of your deficiencies. Every distinction arising either from superior natural capacities, or more favorable advantages of birth, education, connexion, or wealth, instead of in-

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spiring you with an exalted opinion of your own individual importance, will increase your dependance on the Holy Spirit, that you may "render to the Lord," in some degree, according to the benefits which he has conferred, recollecting that "where much has been given, much will be required."

The interrogatory and admonitory language of the Apostle will check every propensity to self-adulation, and dispose you to cultivate that humble spirit which will be your brightest ornament. "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"

LETTER III.

It will be of importance for you to recollect that the excellence of the Christian character does not consist so much in a vivid display of some rare and brilliant virtue, as in the uniform operation of all the principles which

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it actually includes. Candor and humility are the graces which adorn it, but benevolence and zeal are necessary to make it perfect. The one tinges the moral countenance with a lovely hew, the other gives it life and expression.

To separate yourself from the vast community of man, to pay an exclusive attention to your own wants, to make all your speculations and exercises terminate in your own individual gratification, would be to cherish a disposition, very opposite to the spirit of the Gospel. You are commanded by him whose authority you profess to reverence, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and to weep with the mourners in Zion. Whilst the sentimental Philanthropist is satisfied when she has afforded relief to a sufferer who has been forced on her notice, you will feel your obligation to search out the objects of human woe. Following the footsteps of your Lord, you will "go about doing good," and if you cannot, like him, remove the disease, you will endeavor to administer consolation.

But your benevolence will not be restricted to the temporal miseries of others. "Many

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who could not hear of a beggar perishing at their door without horror, can witness a friend dying in impenitence without concern." To avoid having her mind agitated in her expiring moments, by any reference to the necessity of repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, they will cautiously exclude the Minister of reconciliation from the dying chamber, deeming his presence an intrusion which the laws of humanity forbid. But *you* cannot. You regard your friend as a candidate for immortality, and believe that her future state will be decided according to her character. If in the days of health you see her absorbed in trifles, though you may lament your inability to expel the infatuating charms, by which she is held captive, yet you will not neglect to expose their vanity, and to direct her attention to nobler objects and pursuits. Should affliction seize her, and threaten to take her away in the midst of her days, you will not through a false delicacy, allow her to expire under a mental delusion, which will prove fatal to her eternal felicity. You will watch for her soul, as one who must give an account

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that you may "do it with joy and not with grief."

But your benevolence will require a wider range than the limited circle of mere private friendship. Looking round on the scene of desolation which the moral world presents, you will feel anxious to join the "holy band" who are endeavoring to repair it. In former ages this department of christian duty was generally occupied by the opposite sex. *We* were employed as the accredited agents of mercy, and the honor of dispelling the clouds of ignorance which hover over the human intellect, of implanting the incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever, of saving the soul from death, was *almost* exclusively reserved for us. But the period is now come when the great Husbandman is calling you into his vineyard, and we are waiting to hail you as fellow-workers, in the cultivation of the soil.

In our Sunday Schools an important station is assigned you. The female population of this country, on "the dawn of the Sabbath," are standing at "the posts of the doors," to receive instruction from your lips. Aware of the vast importance of early im-

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pressions in the formation of the character, step forward and attempt to impress on the opening mind, the principles of virtue and religion. To sit at home in inglorious ease, or attending merely to your own personal enjoyments, whilst the more humble daughters of Zion are teaching her young disciples to celebrate the praises of the Redeemer, must excite the astonishment of the celestial inhabitants, when they look down on such inactivity.

The perishing heathen claim your sympathy, and the Missionary Society, as on bended kees, implore your co-operation. Whilst some of *your Brethren* leave the land of their nativity to carry the glad tidings of Mercy to distant climes, and are endeavoring to usher in that glorious day, "renowned in ancient song," when truth shall spring up out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven; when the symbol of the divine presence shall hover over the mosques of superstition, and the altars which are now stained with human blood shall bear the mystic emblem of the Redeemer's death; when the Oriental Moloch shall be seen weeping over the ruins of his splendid temple, and the

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charm shall be dissolved which now, as by magic power, perpetuates the horrid crimes of obscenity and murder; "when the mystery of iniquity shall no longer maintain its tremendous usurpations" but

> One song employ all nations, and all cry,
> Worthy the Lamb, for he was slain for us!
> The dwellers in the vales, and on the rocks,
> Shout to each other, and the mountain tops
> From distant mountains catch the flying joy,
> 'Till nation after nation, taught the strain,
> Earth rolls the rapturous *Hosanna* round.

You, within the hallowed inclosures of the closet, can wrestle for the effusion of that sacred influence on which their success depends.

But to restrict your co-operation to prayer, would be fixing a limitation to your agency which the ardor of your passions and the signs of the present times, imperiously forbid. Your influence is great. By instituting weekly subscriptions amongst yourselves, your friends, and your dependants, by emulating those Jewish women who worked with their hands for the hangings of the tabernacle, and brought bracelets, and ear-rings, and jewels of gold, for the service of the sanctuary, you will be able to supply the in-

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creasing demands which are made on the Missionary funds. By employing your restless eloquence in pleading the cause of the widow, who is doomed to perish in the flames which consume the remains of her departed husband, or the deluded devotee* who hopes to expiate his crimes by sufferings which make the feelings of humanity recoil; and by diffusing your spirit in the circles in which you move, you will become the honored instrument of awakening general attention to the final destiny of man, and of giving a degree of popularity to a Society which has stronger claims on public assistance than any to which this generation has given birth.

If ever you have been present at the anniversary of our Meetings, you cannot be insensible to the effects which your ardor

* Maurice, in his Indian Antiquities, says, that the patient Hindoo smiles amidst unutterable misery, and exults in every dire variety of voluntary torture. He passes whole weeks without the smallest nourishment, and whole years in painful vigils. He wanders about, naked, and suffers every vicissitude of heat and cold, of driving storm and beating rain. He stands with his arms crossed above his head, till the sinews shrink and the flesh withers away. He fixes his eye upon the burning orb of the sun, till its light be extinguished and its moisture entirely dried up.

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and perseverance have on our minds. We are delighted and enraptured. By taking notice of the higher parts in that lovely song, which the heavenly messengers once sung over the plains of Bethlehem, you complete the bold and seraphic harmony. Whilst we, more robust and hardy, defend the out-works of our common faith, or storm the camp of the enemy, you, like the females of Sparta, will animate our courage and secure the victory by contending by our sides.

An eloquent writer has observed that, in pursuing his gratifications, man is apt to look upon himself as a being of great importance; in fulfilling his duties to account himself as nothing. Both are extravagancies which it will be his wisdom and happiness to correct. He is neither supreme in worth, nor useless in action. Let him not say, I am but one. My voice will be drowned in the universal din; my weight is lighter than a feather in the public scale; it is better for me to mind my own affairs, and leave these higher attempts to more competent hands. This is not the language of reason and modesty, but of sloth, of selfishness, and pride. The amount of it is, I cannot do

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every thing, therefore I will do nothing. This fatal principle of reasoning has for ages paralyzed the energies of active benevolence; it has produced a criminal indifference to the temporal, but *especially* to the *spiritual interests* of man, and has left ignorance and vice, the two confederate foes of human bliss, in the undisturbed possession of the greater part of the moral world." Suffer not this fatal principle to paralyze you. Having been first in transgression, give the world a decisive proof, that, like some whose names are enrolled in the imperishable records of truth, you are disposed to the extent of your ability, to repair the injury occasioned by the fall.

When surveying the vast extent of evil and misery which is to be counteracted, you may probably be discouraged, from a consciousness that your most zealous efforts will make but little impression; but open your eyes on the sacred vision, and you will behold active agents, laboring in every direction. Some instructing the children of the poor, some visiting the sick, and directing their attention to the great Physician; some raising contributions for the different soci-

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eties which constitute the glory of our land; some distributing Bibles and Tracts, some translating the Scriptures into foreign languages, some enlightening the heathen: and though, as in the erection of the Hebrew temple, the noise of the workmen is not heard, and years are consumed in the arduous undertaking, yet the spiritual building rises, which is to become the house of prayer for all people: "Act well your part, according to your faculties, your stations, and your means. The result will be honorable to yourself, delightful to your friends, and beneficial to the world."

In these zealous efforts, I would press on your mind the necessity of being actuated by a proper *motive*. Like the Apostle, you should be constrained by the love of Christ; because *you* should thus judge, "that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." This is essential to the acceptance of your labors and their permanency. Unhappily, a love of fame, or the mere influence of persuasion or example, have obtruded themselves within

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the pale of the visible church, and directed the energies of some of her members. What have been the consequences? Meeting with opposition rather than applause, having to multiply exertions, rather than gather up the spoils, being required to hew the wood and draw the water, rather than assist at the public oblation; necessitated to pull the ropes and shift the scenes, instead of appearing as the prominent and principle persons on the stage, they have been mortified, and have retired in disgust.

In some instances, not satisfied by withdrawing their influence, and leaving the individual cause in which they were engaged to contend only with its own difficulties, they have wantonly increased them, and have endeavored to clog the wheels of that chariot which they once hailed as the vehicle of benevolence and love. These evils, over which the tear of unavailing sorrow has often been shed, may be prevented from recurring by guarding your motive. A pure motive will separate from the mind every selfish passion, will render you superior to every inert feeling, and will dispose you to endure with calmness every species of opposition which

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you may encounter. This will keep your zeal, like the fire on the Jewish altar, burning with a steady flame, amidst the storms around you. It will give sweetness to your temper, gentleness to your manners, and tranquillity to your mind. It will diminish the number of your difficulties, and capacitate you to feel more exquisite joy in the partial success with which your labors may be crowned.

Go then, by the pure motives influenc'd
Which spring from genuine Faith, and daily shew
How Jesus liv'd—thy lov'd and loving Lord.
Go, copy his humility, his zeal
To glorify his Father, his contempt
Of vain base earth; Disciple of his Cross,
His temperance copy, resignation, truth;
His meekness, pity, large benevolence;
His love of holy privacy, and prayer.
Go, happy favorite, feed his pining poor,
Silent in patient want—the friendless poor—
Neglected by a selfish, wicked world.
Go, rescue youthful thousands from the paths
Of ignorance and perdition. Diffuse
The glorious Light of sacred Truth, o'er
The dark scenes of heathen wretchedness, and
By the sweet eloquence of dying love,
Allure your *Sable* brethren to the Skies.

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LETTER IV.

"NATURAL propensities best mark the designations of Providence as to their application. The fin is not more clearly bestowed on the fish that he should swim, nor the wing given to the bird that he should fly, than superior strength of body, and a firmer texture of mind was given to man, that he might preside in the deep and daring scenes of action and of council: in the complicated arts of government, in the contention of arms, in the intricacies and depths of science, in the hustle of commerce, and in those professions which demand a higher reach and wider range of powers. The true value of woman is not diminished by the imputation of inferiority in those talents which do not belong to her, of those qualities in which her claim to excellence does not consist."* But if *we* are superior in *some* of the faculties of mind, *you* are superior in *others*. If we have more vigor, you have more acute-

* Miss Moore.

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ness; if we have more perseverance, you have more penetration; if we have more inflexibility, you have more feeling. We each excel in those talents which qualify us for our respective stations and duties, and it will display more wisdom to cultivate them than to contend for the palm of sexual superiority.

It is obvious to an intelligent observer, that you possess intellectual powers which are capable of great improvement. But this improvement is neither so general nor so rapid as it ought to be. To what cause must this be referred? Unquestionably to some radical defect in the mode of your education, and the permanent impressions which it produces. Finding that the acquisitions which you have made are sufficient for all the purposes of social intercourse, you deem a close attention to a course of intellectual reading and reflection, either as unnecessary or improper. You suppose, that it would be singular, for a female who does not aspire to the honor of literary fame, to consume much of her time in her study; and though you may admit that extensive knowledge may be serviceable on some occasions, yet

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the sacrifice of health and of delicacy which its attainment requires, is too costly for you to make.

These objections, while they operate on the mind, render its improvement almost impossible. To overcome them is an achievement which you must effect, if you wish to acquire any degree of intellectual eminence. And are there not sufficient inducements to rouse your energies? The first which I shall notice, is the importance of that portion of time which falls between your leaving school, and your final settlement in life. Some imagine that when they have left school they are to abandon all attention to subsequent improvement, having *finished* their education; and though they sometimes read yet it is *only* for amusement. Such a decision is the most injurious which you can form. It enervates the strongest mental powers, and fixes a boundary to their excursions beyond which they are forbidden to pass. At school the mere elements of knowledge were acquired, and now is the eventful time, to reduce them to a regular system of progressive operation.

You may probably look back with some strong emotions of regret, on the countless

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moments of mis-spent time during the period you were professedly receiving instruction; and conclude that if that period could return, you would apply with ten-fold ardor, but let me advise you not to increase their number by neglecting the advantages which you now possess. A portion of your present time ought, certainly, to be devoted to domestic duties, that you may be qualified to superintend the internal economy of a family, but as you are likely to occupy one of the most conspicuous stations in a household, and to move in a circle which includes within it, the *intelligent* as well as the polite, it is of the greatest importance to your future respectability that you should now enrich your mind with the treasures of knowledge. Your progress will be much more rapid than during former years, and though it will not be unattended by difficulties, yet they will diminish as you advance.

The gratification which you will feel in untying some knotty question, in lighting on some novel discovery, in visiting, through the medium of history, the places which have given birth to the greatest exploits and characters which adorn its pages; in springing

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some rich mine of intellectual thought, will repay the fatigue of labor, and be more permanent, because more innocent, than the pleasure arising from fashionable indulgencies. Impelled by an ardent desire to extend the range of your mental vision, you will not, like many of our modern females, dread retirement as the child does the darkness of the night, but hail it as the season of your most refined enjoyments.

Conscious that knowledge and piety constitute the most valuable ornaments of your character, you will not neglect the means which Providence has ordained for their acquisition. As each succeeding day will be accompanied by some peculiar circumstance to engross your attention, you will not permit the hours of the present to pass by unimproved, from a delusive expectation that the next will be more favorable to the attainment of your desire. But if under the fatal influence of an inordinate attachment to company amusements, or from a positive inertness of mind you should allow this spring-time of your existence to elapse without attending to your mental culture, you may regret it to the close of life. In that state of union and

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domestic cares to which you are probably hastening, the multiplicity and variety of your engagements will absolutely preclude an attention to close or systematic study, and pangs, not less acute than those which Moses felt, when he saw his countrymen dancing before an idol, rather than observing the precepts of heavenly wisdom, may be the just reward of your conduct.

The facility with which it will enable you to discharge the duties that are likely to devolve on you, is another reason which ought to induce you to attend to your intellectual improvement. If the law of Providence prohibit you from filling the more prominent and responsible stations in society, it has ordained that you shall occupy stations equally conducive to its general welfare. If you are not to preside in the senate, you are to superintend the affairs of the family; if you are not to instruct from the pulpit, you are in the parlor to communicate the rudiments of knowledge to the Ministers and Senators of a future age; if you are not to administer justice from the bench, you are to enforce the laws of order and economy within your own jurisdiction.

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An aspiring female, who is anxious to ascend the pinnacle of fashion, and to command the admiration of the gazing multitude, may regard these duties as common place, which require no exertion of the intellectual powers. She supposes, that by intuitive discernment she shall discover the best possible manner of discharging them, without subjecting herself to the toilsome discipline of preparatory study. She can perceive no immediate connexion between a familiar acquaintance with Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding, and her capacity for the formation of the youthful character; or between Smith's Wealth of Nations, and her ability to superintend the internal regulations of a family. Indeed, it is more than probable that the allusion may excite a smile, but that smile possesses no magic power to dissolve the connexion. Such a course of reading brings her under the government of reason, compels her to think, to calculate, to compare, and to methodize. It will render her as much superior to the individual who treats it with indifference, as the polished European is to the untutored African.

This discipline will qualify you for any station which you may occupy, however important, or any duty which you may be expected to discharge, however trifling. By this expression we would not countenance the prevailing opinion that any duty is trifling. It may be so by comparison, but not in itself. A single pin, in a complicated machine, may be an insignificant object, when compared with the fly wheel, or the impelling force; yet, if the pin be displaced, the harmony of the whole will be interrupted.

The minor duties of domestic life are as essential to the happiness, the prosperity, and the honor of a family, as those which are more conspicuous. By their variety and the rapidity of their recurrence, involving the responsibility of so many agents, they require the constant presence of an observing and directing mind to superintend them. This superintendance, to avoid the appearance and the reality of incessant application watching every motion of another, or giving in systematic detail, every specific order at the moment when it is to be executed, demands a high degree of mental cultivation. "As in the superintendance of the universe,

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wisdom is seen in its *effects*, and as in the visible works of Providence, that which goes on with such beautiful regularity is the result, not of chance, but of design; so that management which seems the most easy is commonly the consequence of the best concerted plan; and a well concerted plan is seldom the offspring of an illiterate mind."

LETTER V.

THE importance which a cultivated Mind will affix to your character, is another reason that deserves your attention. In the estimation of God, moral principle is more valuable than intellectual strength. He looks with complacency on the feeblest mind, in the most obscure station, which is contending against the evil propensities of its nature, and advancing, though in slow progression, towards a state of infinite purity; but he turns with abhorrence from the most elevated and powerful intellect, when associated with

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vice. A Dairyman's Daughter secluded from the public eye, within the lonely cottage of her father,

"Alike unknowing, and unknown,"

has awakened, by her repentance, the joy of that celestial company, whose breasts glow with holy indignation, when they look on that fallen spirit, whose mental greatness qualifies him to "reign in hell."

But in this world, though moral principle is not rejected, when an estimate is formed of a character, yet there is a superior degree of homage paid to powerful intellect. This is an inversion of the order which is observed amongst the inhabitants of heaven, and should be regarded by us, as one of those fatal mistakes to which we are liable.

To improve the intellectual powers for the sake of the admiration which they may excite, would be to surrender yourself to the entire dominion of an evil passion. The influence of such a passion you should resist, and though it may not be improper to feel pleasure from a conviction that a cultivated understanding receives its appropriate reward, yet in all your efforts of improvement,

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you should be actuated by the desire of qualifying yourself to promote, in a more eminent degree, the glory of Him, "whose you are and whom you serve."

The ascendency which you acquire over *us*, who are the more conspicuous actors in the great drama of life, is so powerful that it is of the greatest importance that such ascendency should be governed by an habitual reference to your responsibility to an invisible tribunal. History tells you that the French and German Philosophers who wished to close the doors of every temple in Europe, to destroy every vestige of the Christian religion, to eradicate from the human breast every latent feeling of attachment to the lovely name of Jesus, and introduce the reign of atheistical impiety; after corrupting the fountain of knowledge, and securing every avenue to the mind, they despaired of success, till they had secured your influence. When this was obtained, the song of triumph was composed, and the banner of victory was unfurled. Possessing a power that could paralyze or animate, according to their wishes, they commenced the attack. But they failed. The cause which they attacked

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survived their destruction, and after recording their worthless names on the pages of its own history, like the great Redeemer at his ascension, it has invested its numerous agents with a commission to extend its peaceful conquests through the whole earth.

That cause, still living, lives to demand your influence in its favor, as a reparation for the injury which you intended to inflict. And where is the nook of Society over which it does not extend? Where is the person who does not feel its energy? "What is his name and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?" Recollect that you carry the mystic leaven which leavens the whole mass. If that be the leaven of infidelity, you will diffuse an influence more fatal than the leper's touch; but if that of genuine piety, to use the emphatic language of the Scripture, you will be "the salt of the earth."

I have often thought, that if an Angelic spirit could assume a human form, and mingle in some of the ordinary associations of life, with what surprise would he listen to the general subjects of conversation. Expecting on his descent, that those for whom the Prince of life expired on the cross, would

be occupied in discussing some of the grand peculiarities of that system of Redemption, on which their hope of final happiness is placed, he would feel no common degree of astonishment to perceive that the whole interview was spent in conversing on the various style of dress, or some other subject equally trifling. Necessity, not choice, must compel him to remain, but if in his presence the language of indecent wit, or improper allusion, should be employed to degrade the truths of the Scripture, he would immediately retire, shedding a tear on his departure, over such consummate wickedness, and secretly adoring that long-suffering Mercy which forbears immediate punishment. If in company your modesty prevents you from taking the lead, yet your piety, if adorning a highly cultivated mind, will give a bias and a tone to the subjects of conversation. Men in general are anxious to afford you pleasure, and if they perceive that you are partial to religious subjects, those who possess a correspondence of taste will cheerfully introduce them, and those who do not, will cautiously avoid every expression or reference which may excite pain or disgust.

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Such an influence employed in a close alliance with the remonstrances of the pulpit, and the labors of the press, would operate as a powerful check to the encroachment of infidelity—it would render the profane less capable of indulging their propensities, by convincing them that the moral atmosphere which surrounds your character is too pure to admit their contaminating presence; and would invest religion, at least in her external forms, with a degree of honor that would secure a respectful homage, if not the affection of the heart.

The superior degree of happiness which you will enjoy by improving your intellectual powers, is another reason which demands your consideration. You must be conscious, that happiness is the object of universal pursuit, and that each individual expects to obtain it in his own way. Minds of a higher order, despising the grovelling pursuits of the Miser, or the inhuman exploits of the Martial Hero, imagine that it is to be acquired by mere literary attainments. Transported by the sublime views which Nature, in her varied aspects, exhibits; charmed by the captivating productions of the Muse's pen,

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or engrossed by the diversified studies of literature and science, they forget that the "fashion of this world is passing away," and that a period is hastening when the final destiny of the soul will be determined according to its *moral* character. *How* they shall appear when standing in the immediate presence of the Judge of all, is no object even of their speculative inquiry. If an individual presumes to suggest to them, that the prospect of future felicity, arising from a cordial reception of the doctrines of the scriptures, is essential to the present happiness of Man, he is sure to excite their ridicule, if not their contempt. To bow their knees at the throne of Mercy, to implore forgiveness through the mediation of a Saviour, to solicit the purifying influence of the Holy Spirit to prepare them for the society and employments of the celestial world, are exercises of such an humiliating nature, that they would blush, and feel themselves degraded, if they were conscious that by any moral considerations, they could be compelled to engage in them. Starting back from the approach of religion, as the witch of Endor from the rising form of the Prophet, they

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exclaim, "depart from us, for we desire not a knowledge of thy ways."

But it is obvious, that their scheme is not so productive of human happiness as they pretend to believe, for we have seen some of the most elevated minds plunged into the depths of woe. Driven from their moorings by the sudden storms of life, we have seen them drifting about for a short period, amidst the conflicting elements, till they have sunk in hopeless Misery. And if you trace this catastrophe to its real cause, you will find it in that theory which makes present happiness consist in mere literary pursuits and mental attainments; but which provides no adequate relief for the sorrows of Man; which supplies him with no motives that can render him superior to the disasters of adversity; which opens to his view no transporting scene beyond the grave.

To a reflecting mind it is astonishing that a plan so defective should ever, for a solitary hour, receive the admiration and homage which are exclusively due to the Christian scheme. This, viewing man *as he is*, proposes a plan for his happiness which will endure the test of examination and experi-

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duce. "And what, according to this communication, are the essential requisites to that condition of mind, without which no man ought to be called happy? A reader of the scriptures will reply, that they are a change of heart, called conversion, the assurance of the pardon of sin through Jesus Christ, a habit of devotion, approaching so near to intercourse with the Supreme Object of devotion, that revelation has called it communion with God; a process of improvement, called sanctification; a confidence in the divine Providence, that all things work together for good, and a conscious preparation for another life, including a firm hope of eternal felicity."

This scheme, devised by infinite wisdom, is adapted to men of every age, character, and situation of life. It descends to the level of the most enfeebled minds, throwing some rays of light within their gloomy recesses, cleansing by its influence, and animating by its promises; and it rises to the most exalted talents, expanding their powers and elevating their desires, without diminishing its lustre, or undergoing any change.

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But by making the essence of human happiness to consist in a participation of the divine nature, and in the expectation of eternal felicity, obtained through faith in the atonement made by Jesus Christ, it does not preclude the attainments of literature from furnishing their respective quota of enjoyment. It allows the Historian, the Poet, the Linguist, the Philosopher, and the Man of taste, to feel that exquisite gratification which arises from their researches and reflections, whilst it reminds each individual that the pleasurable emotions which they may experience in their particular departments of knowledge, must be regarded as auxiliaries to human felicity, rather than as being essential thereto. And this is the light in which they are viewed by the Christian, for the "hour is coming" when neither the attainments of science, nor "charm of earliest birds," will possess the smallest degree of influence over him. At that eventful moment, when the votaries of a delusive science are left speechless and alone, on the verge of an unknown state of being, for which they have made no preparation, he will feel an ecstacy of delight in the immediate prospect of ri-

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taining the consummation of his desires, superior to the most refined enjoyments of a terrestrial nature.

But though the pleasures arising from literary pursuits and acquisitions are only auxiliaries to human happiness, they are auxiliaries of no despicable order. Their influence extends to all the faculties of the mind. It expands the intellect, refines the taste, and enriches the imagination. It exalts the character and has a natural tendency to subdue the propensity to puerile indulgencies. To treat them with contempt, if they are placed within your reach, is to despise some of the most valuable blessings which mortals are permitted to enjoy, and to allow trifles to engross that portion of time which you call your leisure moments.

And will not the improvement of the understanding, qualify you to feel stronger sensations of admiration and joy, in your religious contemplations and exercises? This is a question of great importance. It must be admitted, that the degree of happiness which the Christian scheme produces, depends chiefly on the moral habitude of the mind; yet where there is an equal share of

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mental purity, associated with a powerful and cultivated intellect, the enjoyment arising from an examination of its various parts must be more exquisite than in an ordinary mind.

LETTER VI.

In the preceding Letters I have dwelt on the reasons which should induce you to seek your intellectual improvement, and I now design to lay before you a plan adapted thereto. Such is the natural volatility of some minds, that they cannot fix for any considerable time to one subject. Their reading is dictated by caprice, rather than discretion, and though they read much they retain but little. They occasionally make sudden irruptions into the regions of knowledge, and see the obstacles give way before them: but never stay long enough to complete a conquest, or bring away the

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spoils." Those books which are designed more for amusement than instruction, may be perused when inclination prompts, but those which possess a more intellectual character require a settled plan of attention. You cannot devise a more effectual method of impressing the contents of a work on your memory than by epitomizing it. By such a practice you will be able to ascertain whether you understand the Author; whether the arguments which he employs to establish his opinions or theory be forcible and conclusive; whether the facts which he relates are detailed in a natural and chronological order. After you have formed an abridgement of a few books, the exercise will become peculiarly interesting, and the progress which you will make in acquiring a habit of close and intense application will be very rapid.

But what course of reading is best adapted for the improvement of the mind? This question is perhaps one of the most important which you can propose. The tree of knowledge bears two sorts of fruit, good and evil; and when you approach to gather, it requires the nicest discrimination to distinguish the one from the other.

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Novels, with very few exceptions, should be avoided. The general character of their Authors is a sufficient reason why they should be denied an admission into your library. Alienated in all their associations of thought and feeling, from that system of religion which purifies and exalts the mind, they are abandoned to the evil propensities of their nature, and necessarily impart a portion of their own character to the productions of their pen. The design of their writings is to amuse, and if they produce no other effect, we should not be disposed to condemn them in such unqualified terms. But while they amuse the fancy, they enervate the intellect, by disqualifying it for all sober and refined speculations; they make the mind dissatisfied with all the incidents and facts of history, unless they border on the marvellous; and by giving false views of life, they compel a person to feel as a stranger in the very presence of her own family. From this view of some of the best authors in the highest class of novel writing, it will be abundantly evident that the perusal of these works is more calculated to be prejudicial than advantageous, unless the mind

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is previously fortified with sound principles, and the passions and feelings are completely under the mastery of the judgment. Even then their claim must rest rather on the interest which they excite, than on the instruction which they afford. Whoever draws his opinions of the world, of the manners, characters and pursuits of mankind, from Novels, will enter on real life to great disadvantage; the personages of Novels, especially of those which teem from the modern press, either bear no resemblance to mankind, or that resemblance consists in such a narrow peculiarity of feature, as renders it rather an individual than a general picture. But the strongest and most undoubted objection to novels, arises from the effects which the perusal of them produces on the mental faculties and literary taste; during it the mind is nearly passive, a lounging desultory habit of reading is acquired, so that when works are to be perused which require close and regular attention, and the judgment constantly on the alert, to follow and comprehend the author's observations and arguments, the mind is unequal to the task. The literary taste will suffer equally by the peru-

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sal of almost any Novel; unless, therefore, the habits of close, active, and vigorous attention are of a very powerful and predominating nature, and the taste has been modelled to correctness and purity by long and regular discipline, Novels ought to be avoided."*

But *our* strongest objection to Novels, arises from the influence which they acquire over the heart; and the positive aversion which they produce to devotional exercises. Miss M—— received a pious education, and bade fair to emulate the virtues of her Mother. In visiting the sick, instructing the ignorant, and forming institutions for the relief of human misery, she appeared to be in her element. Her Parents observed with peculiar delight the gradual developement of principles which they fondly expected, would give permanent excellence to her character. But they were disappointed. Her favorite authors were neglected; a little opposition to a proposal which was designed to display her own authority, became the ostensible reason for her relinquishing all

* Rees's Cyclopedia.

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her benevolent engagements; every trifling indisposition or occurrence in the family, was urged as an excuse to justify her absence from the domestic altar, and her visible inattention to the solemnities of the Sabbath, her altered mode of dress, her general deportment towards her former associates, and the asperity of temper with which she would occasionally allude to the rigid and puritanical habits of the circle around her, were decisive evidences of some change in her sentiments and feelings. How to account for a change so sudden and surprizing seemed impossible, till on entering her room, her Mamma saw a Novel lying on her toilet. Bursting into tears, she exclaimed, "O my child, my child!". To assuage the grief of her distressed parent, she promised never more to read such works. For some time she felt unwilling to apply to any literary pursuits. Having lived so long in the region of fiction, associating only with ideal persons, and witnessing only marvellous occurrences, she found no pleasure either in the sober narrations of history, the innocent amusements of poetry, or the sublime truths of the Scriptures. In this state of mental

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apathy she remained a considerable time, occasionally weeping over a remembrance of the happiness she enjoyed in the days of her comparative innocence. She abandoned herself to silent grief. Taking up, as she sat musing in her own room, one of the earlier numbers of her diary, her eye fixed on the following passage—"I have spent a happy Sabbath. One of the little children in my class is evincing some signs of decided piety. I felt the influence of divine truth on my heart, when listening to the discourse this Morning, which was on the death of Jesus. In the closet my fellowship has been with the Father. I have just finished reading Pearce's Memoirs, and the life of Miss Anthony. Oh Religion! thy ways, are ways of pleasantness, and thy paths are peace. If I forget thee let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth: if I prefer not religion to my chief joy."

These remarks revived her former impressions. She wept bitterly. She reproached herself for having abused that mercy which she supposed would now be withheld, but light springing up amidst the darkness

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in which she was involved, she discovered the throne of Grace—she drew near, confessed her transgression unto the Lord, and besought him to accept her graciously, and love her freely. Her prayer went up for a memorial before God, the oppressive load of guilt was removed from her conscience, and the following admonitory language was indelibly impressed on her heart; "Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." Her attachment to her earlier pursuits and habits now returned with peculiar force, the closet and the sanctuary yielded her enjoyments more refined and permanent than the delusive gratifications of the fictitious scene; but she still feels the pernicious effects of her folly. Her mind, which was once comparatively free from improper images, is now incessantly haunted by many, which the purity of her principles forbids her to retain, but which, from long familiarity she is incapable of dismissing. Such reading is the enchanted ground, which you should cautiously avoid, for whilst gazing with interest on the imaginary personages and incidents of the plot, not only may the powers of your intellect

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be paralyzed, but your heart will sustain a more fatal injury, its innocence and peace will irretrievably depart.

Plays generally possess more sentiment than Novels, and their descriptions have a nearer resemblance to the manners of life. Some by the brilliancy of their wit, the accuracy of their delineation of human character, or the exquisite delicacy and the sublimity of their poetic imagery captivate the feelings of the impassioned reader, who would look with a scornful eye on the tasteless being who is insensible to their beauties. But our inquiry does not refer to their literary excellencies, but to the effect which they usually produce. Do they refine the feelings, strengthen the social affections, check the evil propensities of the heart, destroy the false maxims of human conduct, or invigorate the intellect?

It is generally admitted, that the mind derives some certain degree of melancholy pleasure from the perusal of an affecting tragedy. To account for this singular phenomenon forms no part of my present design, but simply to mark the pernicious influence which this species of composition imperceptt-

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ibly assumes over the mind. Pride, envy, malice, revenge, cruelty, and murder, are the prominent passions which it exhibits. If these passions were arraigned at the bar of impartial and inflexible justice, and doomed to receive the just reward of their deeds, the dramatic writer would render an essential service to the cause of morality and religion, but they are transformed by his unhallowed wand into virtues, which adorn the character of his personages.

By the skilful adjustment of the various parts of the plot, a powerful curiosity is excited and kept in action, and the reader is hurried forward with breathless impatience towards the catastrophe. When the Hero falls, in whose destiny he has felt a strong sensation of interest, his spirits are depressed, but this depression gives way to the astonishment and admiration excited by the boldness and energy of his adversary. In a virtuous mind, this feeling would be repressed, but entirely to resist its influence would be impossible. The holy indignation which Christianity inspires against murder would be considerably abated, and if, on sober reflection, the crime could not be justified,

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yet some palliations would be offered to extenuate its enormity.

The perusal of such writings will make no person better, but their ultimate tendency is to inflame the vicious passions, and to diminish the evil of sin; and they may be considered as the presiding genii which nerve the arm of the Duelist and the Murderer.

Comedy is a different species of composition, but its moral influence is equally pernicious. Sometimes the design of the writer is to satirize the vices of men, but the form in which they are represented usually excites more laughter than abhorrence. If he restricted his pen to this object he would be a comparatively harmless creature in society, but he does not. He has formed too accurate an opinion of the character of his readers, to suppose that he shall maintain his popularity amongst them, but on condition of lowering the tone of morals to their vitiated taste, and of affording them amusement by his indecent and profane allusions to some of the facts or doctrines of the scripture. The tendency of such writings depends on the peculiar cast of your character. If your devotional habits are fixed, no permanent

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impressions of an impure nature may be received by perusing them, yet I believe you will sustain some temporary injury. They are generally the productions of men, who are capable, by the magic of their genius, of rendering their subjects peculiarly interesting to their readers, and of creating in their minds an order of opinion and of feeling similar to their own. It is possible to select a few in which moral sentiments are strongly expressed, but the great majority possess a fascinating power, which corrupts the heart. Have you ever, after the tragedy or the comedy has been read, endeavored to ascertain the exact state of your moral feelings? Have you ever detected yourself weeping over the sins which have been displayed by the persons of the drama? Have you ever under their agency, been deeply impressed by the immense importance of an habitual preparation for eternity? Have you ever felt disposed when the Hero has sunk in the arms of death, to contemplate the amazing scene which mount Calvary exhibits? Has the flame of devotion ever been kindled by the fire burning on the altar built by the comic writer? Pure indeed must that mind

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be which can suddenly pass from the captivating charms of Shakespear's genius, or the licentious productions of Kotzebue's pen, to commune with him who dwells between the Cherubim. And do you possess this high degree of mental purity? In you can "evil come and go and leave no spot or blame behind?" No. Like the Israelite who had rendered herself unclean by touching the dead body, you will feel that you have contracted a mental defilement which disqualifies you for an immediate interview with Him, who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil."

If such writings produce, at least, a temporary injury on a mind which is imbued with the spirit of devotion, it is certain that they will be essentially pernicious where that spirit does not reside. If the re-acting power of divine grace does not entirely resist their unholy influence, it does not require much discernment to perceive, that when that re-acting power does not operate, they will form a taste unconsonant with the spirit and design of the gospel.

Let a young and ardent mind learn to glow with enthusiasm at the scenes created

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by our most celebrated dramatic writers, and she will soon feel as strong an aversion to the contents of the sacred volume, as we may suppose Macbeth would have manifested to the society of those holy women who were bathed in tears as their Lord passed to Golgotha. If any circumstance could induce her to read the history of Jesus Christ, as detailed by the Evangelists, or Paul's Epistle to the Romans, just after she has wept over the unfortunate Henry, or laughed at the eccentric drollery of Falstaff, she would either throw them aside with a determination never to peruse them again, or express some strong emotions of regret that they do not possess more powerful attractions.

What the ultimate consequence of such a perversion of the moral taste will be, no human being can determine; during its existence her mind must be entirely alienated, in all its habits of thought and feeling, from the truths of revelation. Can we suppose that on entering the hallowed temple, she will suddenly lose her religious aversions, and as suddenly feel that deep solemnity and glowing animation which its awful and interest-

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ing services demand? Can we suppose that the mere sanctity of the place would communicate any conformity of disposition? No. A disgust similar to what Peter would discover if he were permitted to witness the mummeries of that Church, which professes to be founded on his authority, would be produced in her mind by a distinct exhibition of the humiliating doctrines of the Gospel. To her, the theatre would present more attractions than the "house of prayer," and her passions would enkindle into rapture at the remotest prospect of seeing those plays acted on a stage, which have afforded her such exquisite pleasure when she has read them in her closet. Should the mound of Parental authority be destroyed, and no insuperable difficulties prevent the gratification of her desires, she would soon make a formal renunciation of her antiquated notions of religion, to seek for enjoyment amidst scenes of gaiety and folly.* To follow her through the career of her history, to observe the sacrifice of health and delicacy which the

* See an Essay on the character and Antichristian tendency of the Stage; by *Dr. Styles*.

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hurts of fashionable life require, to be present when she is called to receive the final sentence, would operate as a powerful check against an attachment to those dramatic writings, which make no adequate compensation for the injury which they produce.

LETTER VII.

The popular works of some of our celebrated Essayists and Poets solicit your attention, and the high estimate in which they are held by the public, is a decided proof, in the opinion of many, not only of their moral excellence, but of their utility. To exclude Dryden, Addison, Pope, Johnson, and many others from your library is not my design, for as long as a taste for polite literature prevails, their writings will be admired. Addison and Johnson unquestionably approximate nearer to the character of a Christian than the generality of our fine writers; but it is obvious, on the slightest investigation, that their religion, and the religion of the

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scriptures, though possessing some shadowy resemblance, essentially differ, in their influence, their motives, and their animating promises. They profess their belief in the doctrine of human depravity—redemption by Jesus Christ—the immortality of the soul—and the day of final retribution; but what influence did it assume over their spirit, or their habits? Did it produce that separation from the world, that high elevation of moral feeling, which the Scriptures enforce with such commanding authority? No. The coffee-house was their usual place of resort, where in the society of some of the most learned and most licentious characters of the age, they would spend their evenings. It is true, that if ever a direct attack was made on religion, they rose in its defence; but to vindicate the insulted honor of the Lord of Glory, may have been more congenial with their nature, than to conform themselves to his holy and self-denying example.

If you consult the Scriptures, you will perceive that love to Christ is the prevailing motive by which you are to be habitually governed; but in what number of the Spectator or Rambler does it make a prominent

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appearance? Some casual references are made to him, but they are made to him rather as dead and buried, than as ever living to receive the homage and the obedience of his disciples. Even in those papers which are professedly devoted to the exhibition of divine truth, there is the recognition of sentiments which virtually impugn the peculiar doctrines of the gospel. To make extracts in confirmation of these remarks, is, I conceive, unnecessary; for if you compare their representations of the evil of sin, of the nature of repentance, of the method by which a sinner is pardoned, and justified, and sanctified, with those of the Scriptures, you will soon discover the difference.

He who receives his religious sentiments from Prophets and Apostles, though the chief of sinners, passes from "death unto life," but the disciple of Addison or Johnson is placed in a situation equally painful with the captive Israelite, who occasionally read of a deliverer, without hearing his voice or feeling his power.

If justice compel me to make these animadversions on the writings of Addison and Johnson, it will excite no surprise if more

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severe expressions are employed on those of Dryden, Pope, and most of their cotemporaries. In general they seem to have forgotten the existence of the Christian revelation, or to have thought that its interesting and grand communications are too puerile or insignificant for the attention of men of science and literature. Some, who gleaned in every field, entered the sacred enclosure to enrich their imagination with its beautiful imagery; and sometimes have presented an offering of respect to the Son of God, as they would have done to brahma, if they had visited his magnificent temple; but they did not bear off with them those truths which the imagery was employed to exhibit to the mind. Indeed you will not be able to read many of their lighter pieces without being shocked at the profane allusions which are made to evangelical piety. Not satisfied with censuring some of the extravagant and enthusiastic forms in which it has casually appeared, in the persons of its admirers, they have dared, like the ancient king of Syria, to force themselves into the sanctuary of the Most Holy, to offer an insult rather than a sacrifice, and to subvert the basis on

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which it rests, rather than take shelter in it from the impending storm.

To a mind deeply impressed by the truth and importance of the Christian scheme, and ardently attached to its grand peculiarities, the perusal of their works must occasion a powerful intermixture of opposite feeling. The high gratification which their poetic beauties will afford, must necessarily be accompanied by some melancholy reflections, on the injury which they have done to public morals, and the awful account which they have had to render at that tribunal where no advocate appeared to plead their cause.

"In applying this censure to the poets, it is very gratifying to meet with so much to applaud in the greatest of all their tribe. Milton's genius might harmoniously have mingled with the Angels that announced the Messiah to be come; might have shamed to silence the Muses of paganism, or softened the pains of a Christian martyr."* But Cowper, for correctness of evangelical sentiment, for delicacy of expression, and for

* Foster's Essays.

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devotional feeling, stands pre-eminent. On him rests the spirit of the Son of Jesse, and whilst listening to his odes, with the scene of Calvary full in view, an unction falls from above, more soft and reviving than the dew descending on the top of Hermon. Montgomery is a beautiful writer, and the remarks which a Reviewer applies to one of his works, may with equal propriety be applied to all.—"As a work of genius, the World before the Flood bears the stamp and contains a principle of immortality; while the purity of its sentiments, and the distinguished excellence of its tendency will render that immortality a moral benefit to the world; and constitute for the brow of its author, a crown whose glory shall out-live the verdure, and out-shine the fairest honors of the laurel."*

But if you are anxious to enlarge the sphere of your intellectual vision you will not confine your reading to works of imagi-

* There are many other poets equally deserving of esteem and commendation, with those which have been mentioned, but to enumerate them, and give an opinion of the precise tendency of their writings, would have extended this letter to an immoderate length.

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nation. You will push your researches into other regions, and make yourselves acquainted with the records of history, the economy of nature,* and some of the more useful branches of general science.

The study of History is one of the most amusing, in which you can be engaged, but its real value and importance depend on the design for which it is pursued. To read merely for the sake of knowing when Rome was built, or Carthage destroyed, by what means Alexander extended his conquests, or America obtained her independence, may satisfy a literary taste, but the Christian will have a nobler end in view. He will watch the controlling and directing hand of Providence in making the revolution of empires, the elevation and degradation of individuals, the judgments and mercies attending a particular age or people, subserve the accomplishment of the great scheme of re-

* Goldsmith's History of Animated Nature is an interesting work, though the indelicacy of some parts is extremely offensive. Nature displayed, by Abbe Pleuche, Derham's Physico-Theology, and some Sermons by the celebrated Jones of Nayland, will convey much information on this subject.

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demption. The reason why impiety has been permitted to ascend the throne, and virtue has been compelled to languish in a dungeon, will appear in their full force, destroying those sceptical notions which are intended either to impugn a belief of a presiding agency, or impeach the equity or wisdom of its counsels. It will check that high opinion of our own resources of prudence and of courage, which a superficial knowledge of ourselves will inspire, by presenting to us numberless instances of failure, where these mental qualities have displayed the greatest energy. The works of Rollin, Bossuet, Robertson, Bigland, with some of inferior note, may be perused with safety, but when you take up the Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire, or the most popular History of England, you should not forget that you are in the presence of men whose enmity to the Christian religion pervades the whole of their writings.

If the preceding remarks are correct, it is obvious that the moral principle is often in danger when you endeavor to improve the understanding. The greatest number of our elegant writers appear to be in league with

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sound evil spirits, to counteract the tendency of evangelical truth; to overthrow religion under pretence of raising the fabric of human happiness on its ruins; to destroy an operative belief of a future state of existence. This design they pursue with daring effrontery or subtle craft, varying their modes of procedure according to the age and the character of their unhappy victims. To remain a silent and indifferent spectator of their triumphs would be criminal—you are warned of your danger, not to check the ardor of your literary pursuits, but to set you on your guard against an enemy, who by making a sly attack on your religious principles, which he represents as prejudices, aims at the entire extinction of that hope of a blissful immortality which he is forbidden to indulge.

LETTER VIII.

As you may sustain material injury by an ardent attachment to the polite literature of the age, some expedient should be adopted

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to prevent it, and I cannot conceive of one more effectual, than including in your general study, writings of a decidedly evangelical cast. But some caution may be necessary in making the selection, as there are many, more calculated to excite a feeling of disgust in a refined mind, than to produce a strong mental interest bearing any affinity to the grandeur of the subjects on which they are composed. If in the outset of your inquiries you should meet with a few of this description, you may probably feel more disposed to associate with your favorite authors, than to continue with your new acquaintance. The poverty of thought which they discover, when contrasted with the astonishing fertility of the poet's genius; and the peculiarity of style which is employed as the vehicle of communication, so much below the standard of excellence which you have formed, may induce you to hesitate on the propriety of pursuing a course of reading, which by incessantly offending the taste, is likely to diminish your reverence for the solemnities of religion, and weaken your attachment to the Gospel itself. It would diminish your dislike to such writers, should

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your own mind be sufficiently expanded to enable you to contemplate their productions as the medium by which it hath pleased your heavenly Father to convey the most important and consoling truths to the minds of a vast multitude of human beings. The wigwams of the Indian Tribes are a very despicable order of architecture; but they rise in our estimation when we regard them as affording the comforts of a habitation and of society to a very numerous class of mankind.

But though bad writers are very numerous, yet you will find in this department of knowledge, writers, whose strength of reasoning and eloquence of diction, are equal, if not superior, to the most renowned of the literary world. From their delineations you will receive impressions corresponding with the sublimity of the religion of Jesus Christ, and will be compelled to acknowledge, that if they have not given it additional importance, they have presented it in a most interesting and impressive form. But for your views of this religion to be accurate and extensive, it will be necessary for you to be familiar with the *Scriptures;* and

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the importance of including *them* in your general reading, I now design to consider.

The character of their Author, the style in which they are written, the information which they communicate on the disputed points of natural and moral truth, their ultimate design, in the renovation, and eternal felicity of man, combine to invest them with a degree of importance which no other compositions presume to claim. In the writings of the most celebrated Poets, Philosophers, Historians, and Essayists, either of ancient or modern date, you will perceive a great intermixture of skeptical error, or superstitious folly, with the truths which they exhibit; but of the Scriptures it may be said, as of their great original, in them there "is light and no darkness at all." "Imagine to yourself," (says an ingenious writer,) "a number of men divested of prejudice, opening the sacred volume, to read it with care and attention. Such is its variety and such its beauty, that it will interest each of them in his own peculiar way. The *Scholar* will find in it some of the most sublime specimens of eastern composition. The *Poet* will meet here, bold and striking images, lofty

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and magnificent descriptions, which he may look for in vain among the first of the Greek and Roman classics. Here the Speculatist may discern the most sublime truths brought down to the level of the plainest understandings; a system elevated beyond the utmost stretch of human comprehension, finding its way to the human heart. The *Lover* of *History* will discover authentic records of the most remote and most interesting events, written with simplicity and perspicuity. Departed generations are recalled, and return with their manners and customs. The lives of the great and the good are drawn with fidelity and impartiality. Sometimes he will be presented with the *biography of individuals.* He will see a great mind encountering with a variety of circumstances, struggling with adversity, or withstanding the more dangerous insinuations of prosperity. Sometimes he will be surrounded with *domestic scenes;* and will sit down in the bosom of a family. He will witness their divisions and reconciliations, their failings and their excellencies, their joys and their sufferings. Sometimes the concerns of a nation will burst upon his imagination. He

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will be made acquainted with the sources of dominion, and the cause of national decay. To the *Philosopher* the secret springs of the human heart will be laid open. The movements of the mind, the influence of the passions, every rude and every tender emotion, is uncovered before him, and submitted to his penetration."

But in addition to the mere intellectual gratification which the Scriptures afford the inquisitive mind, they make the most important discoveries on all those speculative and practical truths in which your present and final happiness are involved. To ascertain the moral character of the SUPREME BEING, and what are the dispositions which he feels towards the depraved and the guilty, must be admitted, by every reflecting person, to be of more consequence than the greatest literary attainments. And from what source can you attain authentic information, unless it be from the Scriptures? In the frame and order of the visible creation, you may behold his power and his wisdom, but these properties can impart no relief to a mind oppressed with guilt. In the dispensations of his providence, you may trace the footsteps of

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his avenging justice, and perceive some obscure intimations of his parental kindness; but the apparent irregularity with which they are exercised, will prevent you from attaining any certain assurance respecting their direct operation towards yourself. The utmost which such an investigation can produce, is a conviction that he may punish, or he may forgive; would not the feeling produced by this state of uncertainty on an inquiry paramount to all others, become more awful and depressing than language can describe? Despairing of relief arising from these sources, turn to the Scriptures. They represent God as possessed of every attribute which can excite the admiration, the reverence, the confidence of man. As "glorious in holiness—delighting in mercy—full of pity—not willing that any should perish"—concealing the "thunder of his power," that the contrite may not be overawed by terror when drawing near the throne of grace.

The immortality of the soul is a question which has been agitated in every age, with an order of feeling corresponding in some degree with its importance. But the most

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acute reasoners, though enjoying the advantages of traditional knowledge, have never been able to decide it. And is this suprising? Who can tell that my soul will exist for ever, but that Being who sees the end from the beginning? *Socrates*, on the morning of his execution, was visited by his friends, and the conversation turned on the immortality of the soul. In the course of this conversation, he assured them that his chief support in his present situation, was an expectation, though not *unmixed with doubts*, of a happy existence after death. Here you behold one of the greatest philosophers of Greece standing on the verge of life, not knowing whether he was going to enter on a new state of being, or to cease to exist for ever. If at this eventful moment, a copy of the Scriptures had been thrown into his cell, and his mind, like that of the dying thief, had been suddenly elevated to the comprehension and belief of its important truths, with what ecstasy of feeling would he have hailed it as bringing life and immortality to light; and instead of requesting *Crito* to present an offering to *Esculapius*, he would have exulted in a Savior, by whom he would have

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indulged the hope of being admitted into the realms of glory. But no angel of mercy was near to perform such a kind office, and this great man was left to expire in uncertainty; presenting us with a decisive proof that the dark cloud hanging over our future condition, cannot be penetrated by the rays of the brightest genius. This cloud *is now* dispersed, the gloomy avenue is irradiated by the light of life, the final state of man is revealed in the clearest manner, the seal of confirmation is affixed to the communication, which no human force can break, and the volume which contains it you should receive and read with the strongest emotions of gratitude and joy.

To account for the universal disorder which prevails in the natural and moral world, is impossible, unless you derive your information from the Scriptures. They tell you that the introduction of sin, by the disobedience of our first parents has effected a material change in every part of the *animate* and *inanimate* creation. They teach you to look on man as fallen from a high moral eminence, and to consider the catastrophe as more fatal in the annals of his his-

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tory than the horrors of a deluge, or the conflagration of a universe. He "was created in righteousness and true holiness." His heart, like the temple of Jerusalem, was once the dwelling-place of Jehovah—his understanding was illumined by the light of truth; his inferior passions, as the hewers of wood, and drawers of water, were kept in subjection by the presiding authority; his affections, like the incense rising before the Cherubim, regularly ascended to God, in purity and ardor. But sin, like the destroying army of Rome, has laid this magnificent structure in ruins. The glory has departed. The hallowed flame is extinguished. Owls and vultures, dragons and beasts of prey, haunt the desolated place, whilst a voice is heard saying, "Here Jehovah once dwelt."

The earth yielded her productions spontaneously, but sin has diminished her fertility, and in many parts made her fields a barren wilderness. The elements combined to perpetuate the health of man and beast, but sin has communicated to them a deadly poison. Innocence and harmony were prevalent amongst all the inferior tribes of nature,

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but sin has infused greediness into the breast of the vulture, ferocity into the tyger and the bear, and has armed one part with weapons of hostility against the other.

How these injuries, which have been occasioned by the introduction of sin, can be repaired, is a question which admits of no solution but from the scriptures. They teach you that Jesus Christ has expiated the guilt of sin by his own sufferings on the cross; that he has procured the mission of the Holy Spirit, by whose operations the transformation of the human character is effected: and that he is now seated at the right hand of God, directing the affairs of the world, preparatory to that long-predicted era, when by some extraordinary exertion of his power he will restore all things to their original condition. These are the peculiarities of that great scheme which has been devised to terminate the ravages of sin, and to establish the universal dominion of justice and of love; and though in every age they have excited the indignant scorn of the proud philosopher, yet they engross the attention of the heavenly inhabitants, and

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demonstrate their divine origin by their practical efficacy.

But there are seasons when you must detach yourself from the society of man, when you must stand insulated and alone, and consider yourself as hastening to a state of unchanging bliss or woe. In such a solemn hour, the questions which relate to human grandeur or terrestrial felicity, will sink into insignificance, and you will be absorbed in the importance of one which is generally neglected, "What must I do to be saved?" Many of our celebrated writers will tell you that the different modes of religion are equally acceptable to the Supreme Being, and that a Mussulman, a Brahmin, or a Jew, if sincere in their forms, may indulge as strong an assurance of future glory as the Christian. But how do they know? Have they received any communications from heaven? Where are the credentials of their mission? Or will they presume to say that their *conjectures* on an inquiry which involves the honor of God and the eternal destiny of man, are to invalidate the testimony of Prophets and Apostles, who established the authenticity of their communications by a

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series of miracles, which astonished and convinced their contemporaries, and laid a substantial foundation for the faith of all succeeding ages. And what, according to the communication of the sacred writers, is the method by which you are to obtain eternal life? "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

Deeply penetrated by a conviction of the evil of sin, and overawed by the immensity and purity of the divine character, you will with assured confidence avail yourself of the mediation of Jesus Christ. To him you will cheerfully ascribe the honor of your acceptance with the Father, whilst with min-

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gled emotions of regret and astonishment, you will shed a tear over those who disdain his interference, on account of the meanness of his origin, or reject it because of the superlative dignity of his person.

To flatter you with a hope of unmingled pleasure during your passage through a world ruined by sin, would be improper. You may now say, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage;" but in a few years the scene may be changed—your beloved Parents may be numbered with the dead; the surviving members of your family may be scattered, the hand of fraud may deprive you of your wealth, and your old friends, like those of Naomi, may stand and gaze on your sufferings, without affording the slightest assistance. In this situation will you seek relief in the consolations of philosophy?

> As well the orphan babe may rest
> On some fair statue's marble breast;
> Whence no nutritious virtues flow,
> To soothe the hapless child of woe.

Too feeble to check the swellings of your throbbing heart, or reconcile you to the cause

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of your grief, they will retire and leave you in hopeless misery.

But there is "Balm in Gilead." Religion, rising in the holy land of promise, will impart an energy to your mind, superior to the pressure of affliction. She will remind you that all the events of providence are regulated by infinite wisdom, and engage that they shall "work together for your good." She will cause "waters to break out in the wilderness, and streams in the desert." "The oil of gladness she will give instead of mourning, the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness;" and like the Redeemer, when on earth, will close the wound of the heart and say, "In me thou shalt have peace."

When drawing near the close of life, an order of solemn feeling will pervade your mind, of which in the hours of convivial joy, or even dispassionate thought, you can form no conception. If in that hour you should be left destitute of the animating promises of the scriptures, like the Maniac of the gospel, you will seek for rest, but you will not find it, either in your own reflections or amongst the tombs. A review of your past

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life, spent without any habitual reference to CHRIST, as a *Mediator*, or *Judge*, will overwhelm you with horror. The Novel may arise before you, not to animate or console, but to remind you of your criminal folly, in permitting fiction to consume that time which ought to have been spent in searching after truth. The Minister of reconciliation may be solicited to plead for you at the throne of mercy, yet his inability to allay the perturbation of the heart may only serve to increase its violence, and having lived "without Christ," you may die "without hope."

From this gloomy scene, on which the inhabitants of the invisible world look with emotions corresponding with their nature, I now turn your attention to contemplate the last hours of a departing Christian. She also reviews her past life. The review is solemn and affecting. Gratitude and sorrow alternately arise to elevate and depress her. She acknowledges her obligations to *Him*, who called her by his grace, in early life, who has preserved her amidst the temptations to which she has been exposed, and employed her as an agent to promote the hap-

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piness of others; but she laments the inadequate return which she has made, and the numerous defects which have accompanied the most pure and disinterested actions of her life. Free from that pride which associates merit with virtuous deeds, she knows that she has been an "unprofitable servant." As she advances towards the celestial world, on which her eye has been fixed for years, she feels her unfitness to associate with its inhabitants. Though conscious that the spirits of the just now made perfect, were once amongst the "chief of sinners," yet she supposes that prior to their departure they acquired a degree of mental purity vastly superior to her own. Anticipating her appearance in the divine presence, she conceals her face with her mantle, and says,

> But he is holy, just and pure,
> I am unclean, deprav'd by sin;
> How shall I feel, or how endure,
> Approaching him.
>
> Will it be morning then with me
> Awak'd to hail his glorious light!
> Or must my doleful destiny
> Be endless night?

At this solemn moment, the genius of the scriptures, like one of the Seraphim who

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touched the lips of the disconsolate Prophet, visits her, points her attention to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and says, "Lo, thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged." Delivered from the dominion of her fears, as Moses on the top of Nebo, she arises to survey the boundless prospect before her, and after taking leave of her surrounding friends, she enters into the joy of her Lord.

"Faith strives, but all its efforts fail,
To trace her in her flight:
No eye can pierce within the veil
Which hides that world of light."

If this were fiction, I should imagine that you are disposed to admit the delusion, a delusion which answers all the purposes of a reality—which the most subtle sophist cannot expose; which the most powerful seductions cannot expel. But it is not. It is Truth. Truth demonstrated by argument, and confirmed by fact. Search the Scriptures, for in them there is eternal life, because they testify of Christ.

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LETTERS

TO PARENTS.

LETTER I.

ON EARLY RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.

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LETTERS TO PARENTS.

LETTER I.

On Early Religious Instruction.

THE inhuman and barbarous conduct of the ancient Jews, who "sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils," excites your astonishment and abhorrence. You cannot conceive how a practice so revolting to the feelings of humanity could have been adopted, and naturally conclude that if you had lived in that age, the reigning Moloch would have looked in vain for an offering from your family. But you should recollect, that children left to rise up in life under the powerful influence of depraved principles, are more effectually sacrificed to the great

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adversary, and *you* stand responsible for the crime which such a sacrifice involves. By some artifice or other you may now elude the force of this charge, but you will not always be so successful. The hour is coming when you will be compelled to give an account of the manner in which they have been trained up, and if it should appear, that you have neglected to give them proper religious instruction, you will be condemned. Probably you suppose that this duty, like many others, may be discharged by proxy, and that if you place them under the care of proper teachers, and occasionally administer deserved reproof, the necessity of personal labor is superseded. But your suppositions are not to nullify the command of God. Your duty is to be regulated, not by your own inclinations, but by his law; and though you may determine to evade its application, you will not be able to resist its condemning sentence.

The usual practice of inducing them to learn hymns, portions of scripture, catechisms, and some forms of prayer, which are adapted to their age, is deserving of the strongest commendation. But to suppose that the whole of

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your duty is discharged, when this is accomplished, is making a palpable mistake. The answer to a question may be repeated without being understood, the prayer may be presented while the heart is unimpressed by its solemnity or design. Instruction, limited to these exercises, may assume all the formality of mere custom, and prove comparatively useless. You should explain and illustrate, in the most simple and engaging manner, the various truths which are contained in the Scriptures. Avoid the general yet fatal maxim of teaching them to expect the favor and protection of God, *as a Reward* for their obedience. "If you are a good child, God will love you." "If you say your prayers, learn your lessons, and be obedient to your Parents, you will go to heaven when you die." Such expressions may be in unison with the deistical notions which abound in society, but that you, who profess to receive your religious opinions from the Scriptures, should dare to employ them is astonishing. Does not such a mode of address teach the young mind the pernicious doctrine of human merit? Is it not sowing the tares with the wheat, and planting the

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seeds of error in a congenial soil? Teach them that they are sinners—lead them to the Savior—unfold to their view the glories of his person—the design of his mission—teach them to rely on *his merits* for salvation, and to commit their final destiny to him. Teach them the inseparable connexion between a reliance on him, and the enjoyment of the Divine favor; and to indulge a hope of immortality in proportion to the completeness of their dependance on his death and intercession. Convince them, if possible, of the entire depravity of their nature, and of the necessity of supernatural influence, to render the knowledge which they attain practical and experimental.

. . . . . .

Such sentiments, which you must admit are scriptural, deeply impressed on the youthful mind, will be a powerful, if not effectual barrier against those opinions on human merit which have proved so fatal in the moral world. Opinions which by flattering the natural pride of the heart, often acquire an absolute ascendency over the judgment, and where there is an absence of the grosser vices, conduct the immortal spirit, with comparative ease, to the blackness of darkness for ever.

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Despise the profane clamor which would deter you from attempting to make them serious, from an apprehension of its making them melancholy. Explain to them the nature of that holiness without which none shall see the Lord. That it is more than mere appearance. The imagery and the facts of scripture will afford you essential service in this, as well as every other, department of instruction. Point to the garnished sepulchre, beautiful to the eye, but remind them that it is the abode of death. Delineate the character of the ancient Pharisee, who made long prayers, and disfigured his countenance on the days of public humiliation, to attract the notice of men, while his heart was under the dominion of principles which allowed him to rob the house of the widow, and applaud the clamorous multitude who demanded the crucifixion of the Son of God. Endeavor to excite within them a reverence for the Scriptures, a love for the Sabbath, and the various exercises of private, domestic, and public worship. When engaged in family prayer, let some parts refer exclusively to them. This will keep up their attention. Occasionally take one and then

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another into your closet, and after a few impressive remarks, pour forth the ardent desires of your soul for her present and final happiness. She may arise from her knees apparently unaffected, either by your tears or groans, but she will not easily forget the solemnity of the scene.

If you ask when you are to commence such a course of decidedly pious instruction, I would reply, as soon as reason begins to dawn. This faculty displays its force very early, and the first truths which it receives, like the figures engraven on the rind of a young tree, become more deep and legible with its growth. At this period the care of the children usually devolves on the Mother, who by the softness and placidity of her manners, and the influence which she possesses over their affections, is eminently qualified for her situation; and if her breast glows with ardor for their spiritual welfare, she will not allow this season to elapse without endeavoring to implant the incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever.

Some Mothers are so engrossed by their other engagements, that they think it impossible for them to attend to this branch of

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their duty, and imagine that their children will be better qualified for instruction at a more advanced age. But if *you* are suitably impressed by the importance and responsibility of your influence, you will devote some portion of your time to their religious improvement, and instead of deferring it 'till a future day, you will begin as soon as they are capable of receiving information. "To your direction the daughters are almost exclusively committed; and to a certain age, to you also is consigned the mighty privilege of forming the character of your infant sons. To you is made over the important trust of infusing the first principles of piety into the hearts of those, who may one day be called to instruct, not families merely but districts; to influence, not individuals but senates."

The natural aversion of the heart to the truths and precepts of religion will render unceasing labor on your part indispensably necessary. If you relax in your instructions, the children will soon forget what you have taught them—You must often survey them, with a vigilant eye, checking every evil disposition as it appears, and affording every encouragement to the growth of holy princi-

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ples. But be not always on the look-out for their faults. This will dispose them to dread you as a spy, rather than revere and love you as a Parent; and will induce them to cherish an artful disposition. See and not see. Hear and take no notice. But these maxims have their limits. When you, unknown to the child, discover a fault, it would be a good method of correcting it, if, instead of punishing, you would take an opportunity to state the evil of it, without making any personal charge against the offender, and express an earnest wish that she would never commit it.

But necessity will sometimes require you to take a more open course. As the mind expands, and the child increases the number of her associates, she may begin to treat with indifference the sober maxims of the family, to despise your antiquated taste in the choice of her dress and recreations, and to launch out into scenes of gaiety. Now you must be firm. You must not compromise principle to gratify passion. You must not connive at glaring improprieties to avoid wounding feelings. You must speak with authority, but never speak in anger. The

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celebrated Doddridge observes, that "a parent's correcting his child should be regarded as an act of domestic justice, which therefore should be administered with a due solemnity and decorum; and to behave otherwise on the occasion, is almost as great an indecency, as for a judge to pass sentence in a rage. It is injurious to ourselves, as it tends to spoil our own temper; for peevishness and passion will grow upon us by being indulged towards those who dare not oppose them: and it is injurious to the children. Solomon intimates, that correction and instruction should be joined, when he says, "*The rod and reproof give wisdom.*" But what room is there for the small still voice of wisdom to be heard in a storm of fury? If your children see that you act calmly and mildly; if they read parental tenderness in your heart through an awful frown of your brow; if they perceive that correction is your strange work, a violence which you offer to yourselves from a principle of duty to God and affection for them; they must be obdurate indeed if they do not receive it with reverence. But if they once imagine that you chastise them merely to vent your

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passion and gratify your resentments, they will secretly despise and perhaps hate you for it. In that instance, at least, they will look upon you as their enemies, and may by a continued course of such severities contract an aversion not only to you, but to all that you recommend to them. Thus you may loose your authority by the very method you take to support it, and may turn a wholesome, though bitter, medicine into poison."

Your ultimate success, in impressing religious truth on their hearts, will materially depend on the spirit which you discover on the Sabbath. On this day you should dismiss the world, your conversation should relate principally to spiritual subjects, your family devotion should be more ardent than on ordinary occasions, and you should be punctual with your children and servants in your attendance on public worship. If you are decidedly attached to your Minister, the manner in which you will speak of his services will tend to inspire in their minds attachment to his person. This is of great consequence, as it will dispose them to listen with respect and interest to his instructions. But you dislike him. His opinions on some

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of the disputed points of theology are not congenial with your own, or the manner in which he delivers them is rather offensive to your taste. What is your duty? To return home, overlooking all the excellent remarks which he has made, and to dwell with severity on what you consider his defects? Such a practice will prove injurious to yourself. It will sour your temper and render you incapable of enjoying communion with God. But the evil will not be confined to yourself. Who sits by your side, or around your table? A daughter, whose pride has been mortified by some supposed allusion to her levity of disposition, or gaiety of dress. A son, who is on the eve of quitting the sanctuary of mercy for ever, to rove about amidst the dissipating scenes of life. The illiberal remarks which you make on the manner of the preacher, will supply them with arguments against the truths which he delivers, and by promoting disrespect to his person, you will cherish in their breasts aversion to his doctrines. An impression has been received by your child, which requires your tenderest care, but it is in danger of being destroyed by your anti-christian spirit, or

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a strong emotion of anguish is excited within her breast to hear that man censured or ridiculed, who has been as the Angel of God to her soul. But for the church to anticipate many amiable converts from amongst the offspring of such Parents, would be visionary. If "you eat the sour grape, the children's teeth will be set on edge." If you mock the Priest, they will despise the Sacrifice; and if you contemn the form in which the Offering is presented, they will abandon the Temple.

On the Sabbath evening, when the public exercises are ended, you should endeavor to ascertain what effects they have produced. By proposing questions to the children, you will discover whether they have paid proper attention, or understood what they heard. After this examination, you should address them in a suitable manner, and close the solemn and responsible engagements of the day in prayer.

If you send them to a Boarding-School, be very particular in the choice of the person under whose care you place them. In general, Parents prefer those Schools, in which almost an exclusive regard is manifested to

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exterior accomplishments. I am not so fastidious as to condemn all these accomplishments, but to allow them to engross the whole, or the principal, attention of a child, is criminal folly. It is beautifying the casket, while the jewel remains unpolished. It is giving grace to the figure which worms will soon devour, and leaving the soul deformed by sin. A Preceptress, in addition to her literary or fashionable attainments, should have her mind powerfully imbued with the pure spirit of evangelical piety, or the impressions which have been produced on your children under your own agency, will gradually subside. You may embrace them on their return home, as your offspring, but with what emotions will you witness the change. Your child sings, but the songs of Zion she has not learned. She plays, but on the harp of the Son of Jesse she can strike no note. She moves gracefully in the fashionable circle, but before the Lord of Hosts, her demeanor is censurably irreverent and trifling. She is delighted with the amusements of the ball-room or the theatre, but when religion is introduced into her presence, she regards it with as much satir-

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ical dislike as she would an antiquated nurse, whose services were necessary only in the days of childhood.

The feelings of the great progenitor of men, when he beheld his lovely Eve, "defaced and lost," were not more acute than those which are produced in your breast, by this unexpected transformation. The continual presence of such a child, whose religious aversions are likely to be strengthened and multiplied, by all her associations and pursuits, will perpetuate the anguish, and when the hour, so eventful in human destiny, arrives, instead of following her to the house of Obededom, where the ark of the covenant resides, with the incense and the manna, you may be compelled to see her go into the land of the enemy, where "The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and pour out drink-offerings unto other gods." You follow her with your prayers that she may be preserved from the paths of the destroyer, and indulge the forlorn hope that the impressions of her early days may be revived; but every

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symptom which you discover evinces the entire absence of religious feeling from her mind. The hour of your dissolution draws near. You review the past and pray, "God be merciful to me a sinner." You look forward to the future and pray, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." But the dread of hearing the groans of your once promising child, when you are mingling your praises with the redeemed, overwhelms you with sorrow, and you depart in agonies. Is this a fictitious scene? No. It has been witnessed again and again, and there are many Parents, who are now weeping over the moral injury which their children have sustained at Boarding-Schools.*

* It is by no means the Author's wish to include *all* Boarding-Schools in the censure which this Paragraph conveys. He rejoices in the knowledge of many exceptions, which he is confident will increase in number and respectability, if the *Religious* Public be not wanting in their support.

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LETTERS TO PARENTS.

LETTER II.

On the Obligation of Parents to give Religious Instruction.

A PERSON recognising the immense importance of religious instruction, if ignorant of the prevailing habits of the age, would naturally suppose that every house in this christianized country is a synagogue, every family an attentive audience, and every parent a diligent teacher. But let this stranger visit us, and he would retire with a firm persuasion that he had lighted on some deistical territory, rather than far-famed Britain. In some families he would see an altar erected to God, and the morning and evening sacrifice regularly presented, as in

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the Hebrew temple, but he might dwell with the great majority, for six succeeding days, and if no formal questions were proposed, he would be unable to ascertain whether they were Jews or Atheists. Amongst them there is no prayer, no religious instruction. If he tarried with them over the Sabbath, he would perchance see them go out and return home, but if he were to listen to their conversation, he would not imagine that they had been to the house of devotion, unless he supposed, that like the ancient Jews, they had turned it into an house of merchandise.

If this statement be correct, is it surprising that the restless spirit of infidelity is pervading all classes, corrupting the morals of the rising generation, removing the landmarks of social order, destroying our reverence for the peculiar doctrines of the Scripture, and producing that state of degeneracy which is to precede the second coming of the Son of man? Instead of being astonished at its rapid and alarming progress, I rather wonder that, like the Assyrian conqueror, it has not laid the external fabric of Christianity in ruins, and led her adherents captives

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into its own cheerless dominions. That I am not with my Brethren, sitting beside some running stream, hearing the cruel taunt, "Come sing one of the songs of Zion" —must be referred to the secret influence of an invisible Being, who has fixed limitations to the ravages of this evil spirit, which is compelling the families of my country not to "mourn apart," but to sin in common.

"I will pour out my fury on the heathen, and on *the families* which call not on my name," saith the Lord. He has been driven from the threshold of our dwellings to the top of the mountain, where he stands, not weeping as when from Olivet, he surveyed the approaching visitations of judgment towards his once beloved city, but saying, in awful accents, "Shall I not visit them for these things? saith the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" At such a crisis do not resemble the Prophet, who said, "Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of way-faring men, that I might leave my people, because they are not valiant for the truth on the earth;" but take your station between the porch and the altar, and cry, "Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not

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thine heritage to reproach," if peradventure the arm of vengeance may be stayed.

When a general reformation is to be effected, it is obvious to every reflecting person, that it must commence with individuals. To declaim against others, if we are partakers of their sins, is a species of hypocrisy very common, but it is attended with a degree of criminality which he only can determine, who weighs every action, with its motive, in the balances of the sanctuary.

If you have hitherto neglected the impetious duties which these letters are designed to enforce, do not suffer another day to elapse without giving them that attention which they deserve. Consider your obligations. The first which I shall notice, arises from the claims of your children. "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." You probably "rise up early, sit up late, and eat the bread of sorrows," that you may be able to give them a genteel education, and advance them to some reputable profession or situation in Society. But do you suppose

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that you have faithfully discharged all the claims which they have on your care and attention, when this part of your duty is performed? If, like the beasts of the field, they were designed by their Creator merely to move about in the circle of life for a few years, and then sink into eternal oblivion, you might when bequeathing your inheritance and spoils amongst them, receive the plaudit, "Well done, good and faithful servant;" but the voice of God forbids you to form such an opinion. They are immortal. They will live forever. Their final state of existence will depend on their religious character; and will you take no pains to form it after the model of the Scriptures? They came into being through your instrumentality, with depraved natures, and are exposed to endless misery, and will you make no strenuous efforts to rescue them from this perilous situation? If you neglect to warn them will they think of danger? If you omit to communicate instruction, will they deem it of importance? If you never urge on them the solemnities of a day of final retribution, will they prepare for the coming of the Lord? The language of

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Ezekiel which is usually applied to the Ministers of the Gospel, is if possible, more applicable to you, in reference to your children, "When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand." They are placed under your own roof, are connected with you by the indissoluble ties of nature, reflect your own image, and present claims on your moral solicitude, which to disregard will be fatal to them and to yourself.

The second obligation which I shall consider arises from the claims of the Church. By the Church, we mean those who avowedly profess attachment to the person and the laws of the Redeemer, under whatever denomination they may be classed in the religious world. In the Church, the unholy will mingle with the spiritual, as the tares grow in the same field with the wheat; but this does not destroy its connexion with Christ, nor your obligations to seek its pros-

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perity and increase. If its Ministers* endeavor to impress on the minds of your children the necessity of repentance, of faith in Christ, the importance of revering all

* Though the Author does not wish to pass any censure on his brethren, yet he cannot help saying, that he is apprehensive that there is too little attention paid in general to the *children* belonging to the congregation. The children of the poor receive religious instruction on the Sabbath; but are there not many children of reputable parents, who receive no religious instruction? They are not taught at home, because their Parents do not consider it of importance or cannot find time to attend to it; neither can they be taught at a Sunday School, as that would be degradation. What is the consequence? Many who are likely to occupy important stations in society, rise up in life, more ignorant of the Gospel than the children of the poor. Their attachment to religion is local and temporary. Let them remove to another place, and be exposed to allurements, adapted to their taste, and they are irrecoverably lost. How can these evils be avoided? The Author can devise no method, unless the Minister will appropriate some portion of his time to give them instruction. This method he has adopted some time, and most of the children belonging to his congregation, who do not attend the Sunday School, meet him in the vestry twice every month. They are pleased by the attention which they receive, and the progress which they make in religious knowledge is very rapid. A Library is established at the expense of the Parents, which supplies them with appropriate books for reading. If this plan were universally adopted, would not many, in all probability, be preserved from the paths of the destroyer, who are now taken captives by him at his will?

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the sacred institutions of religion, the solemnities of death, and of future judgment, can they reasonably expect that their exertions will prove successful if no reference be made to these subjects in your daily intercourse with them?

Perhaps you occupy a prominent station in the church, your example operates with an energy and to an extent beyond your own conception. If your inferiors, or your equals, who pay a deference to your opinions and habits, should perceive that the instruction of your children forms no part of your family arrangements, will they not be exposed to the powerful temptation of neglecting their own? Often has the writer, when reproving the lower orders, for their criminal negligence towards their offspring, been referred to the conduct of their superiors, as a justifiable excuse; and though he is conscious, that it is a superficial one, yet he has found it impossible to counteract its force. Does not your elevation increase your responsibility? Is not your influence a talent? To wrap it up in a napkin, would injure only yourself, but to allow it to be diffused abroad, forming an impenetrable

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shield to protect others from the keen arrows of reproof, is a crime of no ordinary magnitude.

The Church is founded on a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. The waves of opposition may dash against her projections, the winds of fury may howl around her towers, her glory may be concealed from the public eye by the mists of prejudice, and her enemies, like the ancient Edomites, may cry, Rase, rase, even to the foundations thereof, but he who dwells within will make her an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. "The sons also of them that afflicted her shall come bending unto her; and all they that despised her shall bow themselves down at the soles of her feet; and they shall call her, The city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel."

But though the preservation of the church is certain, yet do her Ministers or her Members live for ever? No. Death enters the gates of Zion as well as the dwelling-places of Jacob, and bears off the anointed Priest as well as the private worshipper; and from whence can she expect a succession to

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arise but from the families called by her name? To them is the promise made, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring;" and will you neglect to claim by prayer and secure by instruction, its application to your own? Can you endure the thought of having your name extinct in the sacred roll at your decease, and of being compelled to make the melancholy reflection, that you have taken no pains to induce a son or daughter to build up your house in Israel? Who are to support her numerous Societies, to encourage her Ministers, to superintend her internal economy by serving tables, visiting the sick, pouring the oil of consolation into the wounded spirit, when you have entered the sepulchre of your fathers? Can you look on the son of your vows without praying that a double portion of your spirit may fall on him with your descending mantle? Can you look on your lovely daughter without praying that like another Anna she may not depart from the temple, but be found serving God continually. "Walk about Zion, and go round

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about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following." "You are here enjoined to contemplate the fabric of the spiritual Jerusalem, wonderfully raised, and as wonderfully preserved; to consider the parts designed for use, for strength, for ornament; that you may be able to instruct your posterity in the nature and history of this holy building, and in their duty of forwarding and defending it from generation to generation."

The third obligation which demands your attention arises from the claims of the world. Having left the society and the amusements of the world, as too puerile or licentious for your taste, and entered a purer region, where righteousness sways the sceptre, and peace follows in her train, those whom you have forsaken, as well as those whom you have joined, will expect a becoming consistency of conduct. They will not be satisfied by a grave demeanor in the temple of devotion, but will push their inquiries into your more private retirements, to see how you attend to the less conspicuous duties of your profession, and particularly as to the

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manner in which you train up your children. And can they suppose that you are solemnly or delightfully impressed by "the powers of the *world to come*," if they perceive that your principal anxiety for them is confined to the *present*? Will not such a discovery compel them to class your amongst the most inconsistent part of society, who profess exalted sentiments which have no corresponding effect in the ordinary habits of life; or, what may be more fatal to their own destiny, induce them to imagine that the awful sanctions of religion are the mere phantoms of superstition, designed to terrify the credulous? Guard against such evils, and when the question is proposed, "What do ye *more* than others?" point to a well-regulated and well-instructed family, not dreading impeachment when you say, "As for me and my house we serve the Lord."

Whether religion is essential to the harmony and happiness of society, is a question which has often been disputed by infidel Philosophers; but it is presumed that in your estimation it is decided. In your opinion it gives stability to the throne, integrity and firmness to every other part of the legisla-

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ture, and authority to the laws; it promotes the habits of industry and frugality amongst the poor, inspires the affluent with principles of benevolence and compassion, and possessing one of the attributes of its divine Author, is present in every place, beholding the evil and the good, administering the balm of consolation, or the bitter ingredients of anguish, according to their peculiar character. To survive the destruction of a moral system so adapted to man, as a citizen of the world, or as a candidate for immortality, would be to witness a catastrophe more fatal to human happiness, than to see the sun turned into darkness and the moon into blood. To admit the truth of these remarks, and not to be influenced by them, is one of those anomalies of the mind which we can neither explain nor excuse.

Are you not compelled, by the authority of the Scripture, and by virtue of your connexion with Society, to promote its welfare to the extent of your ability?—and can you so effectually discharge this duty as by propagating the principles of religion around you? Every child who leaves your house,

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devoid of the fear of God and the love of man, is an Ishmaelite, whose hand is raised against every evangelical principle, because every such principle disputes his legitimate claim to happiness; and though he may maintain his independence amongst his brethren, yet this will be acquired and perpetuated by the sacrifice of those sacred maxims which form the only bond of union and strength between the different members of the community. You know who hath said, "Righteousness exalteth a nation." Let me therefore adjure you, before the Lord, to lay the foundation thereof in your first-born, and then in your youngest son you may set up the gates thereof.

The last obligation which I shall mention, arises from the authority of God. To his ancient people he gave the following charge.—"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." A similar charge is delivered in the New Testament—"And ye,

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fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." This is represented as the ordinary method which he employs to perpetuate a knowledge of his revealed will through the successive generations of his chosen people. "I will utter dark sayings of old: which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done, for he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generations to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children; that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments." Such is the law of the Lord, and he will call you to give an account of the attention which it has received. If you now treat it with indifference, that day, which will be ushered in with the voice of the Archangel and the

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trump of God, will be a day of lamentation and bitter weeping. "Give me leave to direct you to it in this distant prospect, while you have an opportunity of avoiding its terrors. If you go on in this cruel negligence of the souls of your children, how will you dare to meet them at that judgment seat? How will you be able to answer the great Father of spirits, when expostulating with you, on account of his offspring, as well as yours, who have been betrayed and ruined by your neglect? Inhuman creatures, may he justly say, to whom should I have committed the care of them rather than you? Did they not, by my appointment, derive their being from you? Did I not implant in your hearts the natural affections of parents towards them? And to increase the obligation, did they not pass through the tender scenes of infancy and childhood in your arms and under your eye? If *you* had no compassion for their perishing souls, if you would exert no efforts for their deliverance and salvation, from whom could those compassions, those efforts, have been expected? But wherein did they appear? Behold the book of my remembrance, the rec-

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ords of thy life thrown open before thee. Where is the memorial of one hour spent in holy instruction or in fervent prayer, with them or for them? Can I approve, can I acquit you on such a review? Or shall I not rather visit for these things, and *shall not my soul be avenged* for such a conduct as this?"

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LETTERS TO PARENTS.

LETTER III.

The Encouragemements which are given to Parents to give Religious Instruction.

"TRAIN up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it." But is it not melancholy to reflect on the numerous exceptions to this general rule which have occurred. Cain, the first-born child of man, rose against his brother and slew him. Ham, who, with his pious relatives, passed in safety over the wreck of nature, became the distinguished patron of idolatry. Ishmael, the eldest son of Abraham, was a wild man; his hand was against every man and every man's hand against him. Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron,

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were consumed by fire from the Lord, for their impiety. But we need not refer to the page of history to prove that children do not always inherit the principles which adorned the character of their parents, for many instances have fallen under our own immediate observation, which substantiate the fact. Talents which have been consecrated by the vows of the mother to the service of the Sanctuary, we have seen employed in ridiculing its solemnity, and the most promising appearances, after exciting the gratitude of the father's heart, we have known disappear.

The issue being so very opposite to what was expected may excite astonishment, but on investigation it is probable that this feeling will subside, and we shall perceive that nothing different could have been rationally anticipated. The early formation of the youthful character devolves on the Mother, but it is the province of the father to complete it. His avocations and pursuits are unfavorable to the conscientious discharge of his duty. His attention is engrossed by business. The complicated machine which he has to superintend, is so intricate in its

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parts, and exposed to so many accidents, that his mind is habitually distracted. His general feelings are of a worldly nature. His conversation in the moments of relaxation turns on the occurrences of the day, and if he stands allied either in interest or affection with the conflicting politics of the times, he is in danger of forgetting the glories of another world amidst the confusion of the present.

His character sometimes becomes a snare. He stands high in public estimation. He is chosen to regulate and control the movements of a religious society. The vows of humanity are upon him, and he is compelled to attend to the cries of the fatherless and the widow. The poor, the ignorant, and the dissipated, awaken his sympathy and consume his time. His numerous engagements detain him from home, and often is he obliged to confess, "mine own vineyard have I not kept," while he is diligently attending to the cultivation of others.—Exhausted and fatigued by the diversified labors of the day, and irritated by the obstinacy and petulance of those with whom he has associated, he returns absolutely incapable of discharging

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the devotional exercises of his family with energy or feeling.

These circumstances, on their first occurrence, occasion many unpleasant reflections, but after they become habitual, they are vindicated on the principle of necessity; and by an inverted order of reasoning, it is presumed that regular attention to foreign claims will justify a partial neglect of those of the family, and that public duties are of more importance than domestic or private ones. What is the consequence? The children are permitted to rise up to years of reflection, without receiving that course of pious instruction which they require. Their moral taste becomes vitiated, their passions acquire strength, and perceiving from the conduct of their father, that religion, in his estimation, is only a secondary object, they hastily presume that it is unworthy their notice. When such an impression is received, they either reject the Gospel System with scorn, or treat its external forms with polite respect rather than cordial esteem.

To expect in the ordinary course of events, a contrary result, would be as romantic as

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to expect to gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles. On whom must the guilt of such an issue be charged? On the children? Unquestionably they are answerable to God for their own decisions, but the parent is not exonerated, and though he may try to extenuate his conduct, he cannot justify it. He may urge his engagements and his pursuits, as excuses, but the reply is on record. "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

The order of your duties is appointed. You are first to attend to your own personal religion, then to your family, then to the church and the neighborhood in which you reside, and passing the boundaries of your own country, you are to sympathize with the moral wretchedness of the world, attending as you advance in the career of active benevolence, to the claims of your business, with an intenseness corresponding to its relative importance. But if you reverse this order, and place the first last, and the last first, you will discover your error when you may not be able to correct it.

But though there is a close connexion between the means and the end, yet instances

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will sometimes occur in which the most diligent and affectionate attention of the parent is apparently useless. In that case you may be cast down, but you should not despair. Amidst the sorrows of your heart, a consciousness of the divine approbation of your conduct towards your children will afford you no small degree of satisfaction. Unappalled by any keen reflections on your criminal levity or negligence, you may appear with more confidence at a throne of Mercy, when praying for the gracious interposition of the Redeemer. In some sacred moment you may hear the angel of consolation saying, "thy prayers are heard," and live to embrace in the arms of Christian fellowship your long-lost child.

But suppose you are denied the gratification of seeing any immediate advantage resulting from your pious instructions, do not rashly conclude that they will prove useless. The principles which you have instilled into the mind may lie concealed for years, without being destroyed. They may be striking root and expanding into life, amidst the most unfavorable circumstances. They may be exercising authority, when you think

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they are held in subjection, and commanding obedience when you imagine they are silent as the grave. "Where," says Mr. Cecil, "parental influence does not convert, it hampers. It hangs on the wheels of evil. I had a pious mother who dropped things in my way. I could never rid myself of them. I was a professed infidel; but then I liked to be an infidel in company rather than when alone. I was wretched when by myself. These principles and maxims spoiled my jollity. With my companions I would sometimes stifle them; like embers we kept one another warm. Besides, I was here a sort of Hero. I had beguiled several of my associates into my own opinions, and I had to maintain a character before them. But I could not divest myself of my better principles. I went with one of my companions to see "The Minor;" he could laugh heartily, but I could not. The ridicule on regeneration was high sport to him, to me it was none; it could not move my features. He knew no difference between regeneration and transubstantiation. I did. I knew there was such a thing. I was afraid and ashamed to laugh at it. Parental influence

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thus cleaves to a man; it harasses him; it throws itself continually in his way."

The exceptions to the general rule, to which I have referred, are not without their use. They teach you the necessity of supernatural co-operation to secure success. In religion, as in nature, the seed is scattered in vain unless the Lord give the increase. But is the possible failure either to prevent or relax your exertions? No. In the morning you are to sow the seed, and in the evening you are not to withhold your hand. Your encouragements are numerous. Success is possible. Though your children may have resisted every effort which you have employed to impress truth on their hearts, though they may manifest an increasing aversion to the sacred exercises of devotion, and seem resolved to rush into the gay and dissipating scenes and amusements of the age; yet they are not inaccessible to the transforming efficacy of that grace to which you owe every principle that adorns your character, and every holy feeling which animates your hope. He who infused a power into the inefficient means of instruction which were employed to enlighten your

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understanding and renew your heart, who brought you nigh by the blood of Christ, when you were afar off, still possesses the residue of the Spirit. His arm is not shortened, that he cannot reach them: his ear is not heavy, that he cannot hear you.

Success is probable. The method to be adopted is the most rational which can be devised. Religion is a science which must be learned. Hence the necessity and propriety of instruction. Some of its truths are wrapped in impenetrable mystery, these you should not dare to explore, nor try to explain. State the authority on which they are established, and to prevent any improper feelings being excited, refer to some of the admitted facts of the natural world which are equally incomprehensible.*

But there are others which must be understood, in their nature, connexions, and practical bearings. *Train up* a child in the way in which he should go. The Hebrew word signifies to initiate into some science.

* Butler's Analogy of Religion is a very suitable book to put into the hands of a young person who feels disposed to object to those truths of Revelation which he cannot comprehend.

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Lead them on from one truth to another, presenting to their minds the evidences on which they rest, and you will so effectually subdue their understandings, that though they may become infidels in practice, they cannot in opinion. Is not this an advantage? It is like erecting a battery in the camp of an enemy, which if it does not compel him to surrender, will prevent him from invading your territory.

And is it not the obvious dictate of reason that you should place as many obstacles in the path to ruin as possible. Unable by the most powerful motives, to subdue the heart, yet by subduing the understanding, which is more free, you will render your child incapable of proceeding with ease. In seasons of dissipation, when the uninformed mind is gay and sportive, a sudden gloom will overcast his spirit, and when solitary and alone, he will be scared by the visions of the night. At such a crisis, the truths of religion, rising before him, will uncover the dark abyss, as the certain doom of his impenitence and folly. The piercing cry of the distracted Jailor, may proceed from his lips, "What must I do to be saved?" and

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the instruction which you now impart, like the holy Apostle, will reply, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Familiar with the plan of mercy, he will cast a wishful eye on the joys which it affords the repenting sinner, and venture to implore the grace which absolves from guilt, and imparts strength to resist the evil propensities of the heart.

Such a course of instruction will prepare them for the labors of the pulpit. The minister has to contend only with the passions. When he thunders the terrors of the Almighty over their heads, or dwells with raptures on the wonders of redeeming love, they are under no temptation to suppose that his vehemence or his tears are the mere professional artifices of his order, but the ingenuous signs of a heart powerfully imbued with that spirit of which they feel themselves destitute. "Proceed, sir," said a person who had enjoyed the advantages of a religious education, (to a Minister well known to the Author,) "in your usual style of preaching—You may imagine from the air of indifference which we assume in public, that your sermons produce no effect. It

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is a mistake, sir. They make us wretched. They bring before our imagination the scene of home, when our parents taught us to revere the name of Jesus; they drive us to our wit's end; they make us dread futurity, and sometimes compel us to pray. You have, sir, our conscience on your side, and though we laugh when we ought to weep, yet we are conscious that we must ultimately yield either to grace or to vengeance."

LETTER IV.

The Encouragements which are given to Parents to give Religious Instruction

Moral causes, though they may not appear to operate with so much certainty as natural ones, usually produce an effect. If in some instances, religious instruction has failed in the formation of the character, yet in many it has succeeded. Is it not amongst persons who have enjoyed its advantages, that we

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are most successful in our professional labors? Sometimes an alien from the common-wealth of Israel is admitted into our communion, but in general the children of the pious become our fellow-citizens, who after they have made an open profession of religion usually remain permanently attached to their principles and privileges, while many of the mixed multitude apostatize and renounce them for ever. Hence we perceive that the operations of divine grace are in unison with the uniform language of the Scripture, "I will be a God to thee and thy seed after thee." This promise, though originally addressed to Abraham is not restricted to him. It is a piece of holy ground, on which *you* may stand, to plead with the Lord for your children. When the present dispensation of mercy was ushered in by the effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the children of believing parents were noticed in a peculiar manner. "Now, when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in

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the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you and to your children." And have not the facts which have transpired under the agency of divine truth, confirmed these declarations? How many, with whom we have "taken sweet counsel and walked to the house of God in company," can utter the expressions of the devout Mrs. Rowe—"I bless thee with all my powers for the privilege of my descent from pious ancestors; that thou hast been their dwelling place from generation to generation, and hast not taken thy loving-kindness from their seed, nor suffered thy faithfulness to fail. Thou hast extended thy mercy to me, the least of all my father's house, unworthy to wipe the feet of the meanest of the servants of my Lord, and yet by an absolute act of goodness, I am brought into thy family and numbered with thy children. Even so it has seemed good in thy sight, who art gracious to whom thou wilt be gracious."

The character of the dispensation under which you live, and the signs which mark the present era of the church, are motives

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which could not have operated at any former period, but now their influence is powerful and encouraging. At no time from the first revelation of mercy, has the devout worshipper been left in a state of absolute ignorance of any of the peculiar doctrines of the gospel; yet it must be confessed that they have appeared in a more clear and impressive form since the descent of the Spirit. To the ancient Israelite the charge was, "Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up;" and at a subsequent period, the promise was given, "and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed;" but from the circumstances attending that celebrated peo-

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ple, it was very easy for them to construe the command as directing them to initiate their children into the mere ceremonies of their national faith, and, the promise as securing a successful result. But no such a fatal mistake can be made by you. The truths of revelation shine with a steady lustre, and if to a superficial gazer, they appear like the stars of heaven, irregular and unconnected, yet *you* perceive their nature, harmony, and order. You know what you are to teach your children, and the ultimate design which this instruction is intended to accomplish, and though you may doubt the efficacy of your labors, yet are you not authorized to expect the co-operating power of the Holy Spirit? And does not his distinct and separate agency, in the economy of Redemption, which is so expressly avowed in the New Testament, give to the present dispensation of mercy a superior degree of glory to any which preceded it? "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither

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knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." And for what purpose does he dwell within you? Not merely to carry on and perfect the good work which he has begun in your own heart, but to give efficacy to the means which you are employing with your children. Hence it is obvious that your dependance for success must be transferred from your own agency to that of the Holy Spirit, and that the difficulties which defy the utmost efforts of your power to surmount, will instantaneously vanish at his approach.

In connexion with this, I would allude to the signs which mark the present era of the church, as affording you encouragement in your arduous labor. Every circumstance in the moral and political world indicates that some great crisis is approaching, which will produce a powerful effect on the opinions and habits of men. The friends and the enemies of religion appear to be equally zealous in augmenting their numbers, as if the controversy once agitated on mount Carmel was on the eve of being decided for ever. The territory which formerly lay between the two opposing camps, is rapidly

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contracting its boundaries, and its inhabitants, who were in ancient times permitted to remain neutral, are now compelled to join one of the rallying standards. Each party assumes a formidable attitude, and though the illuminati, with their numerous tribes, have been routed and disconcerted, as when the powers of darkness were expelled from the regions of glory, yet like those fallen spirits, they imagine that by some desperate effort, they shall take revenge, if they do not obtain a victory.

Ascending into the pure region of prophecy, you will be able to foresee the issue of the contest; "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful." Whether this splended triumph over the confederated hosts of infidelity shall precede his second coming, by the gradual influence of divine truth; or is reserved as the first trophy of his conquering power, after his descent, is a question which we do not intend to discuss, but as the moral aspect of the world prognosticates some approaching change, when

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christianity, disengaged from the incumbrances of human invention, shall ascend the throne and govern the nations of the earth, it will appear on reflection to be your imperious duty to engage your children on the Lord's side, lest they and their descendants should be involved in the general overthrow. Such are the extraordinary movements of the religious and profane world, that every considerate mind heaves big with anxiety, as when two powerful monarchies hasten to the field of conflict; and can you remain insensible to their ultimate bearing on the moral destiny of your offspring? To sleep in a storm, or to be absorbed in personal gratifications when the enemy is besieging the city, may admit of some excuse, but to be indifferent to the present appearance of the times, and the illucidation which they are giving to the mysterious records of prophecy, is to betray an apathy of feeling which ill accords with the character which you sustain.

As in the order of providence, we generally find that our resources of safety multiply in proportion to the danger with which we are threatened, so at the present period, your opportunities to promote the religious im-

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provement of your children, keep pace with the snares which are laid to seduce them from the faith. What a variety of engaging works issue from the press, almost every month, to interest their attention and to form their habits. If the numerous Associations and Societies, existing around you, cannot infuse the principle of divine grace, yet are they not calculated, by the influence which pervades them, to give permanency to those impressions which have been produced through your instrumentality? By becoming a teacher in a Sunday School, or an active member of a Missionary, Bible, or Tract Society, is not your child more likely to be guarded against the fascinating charms of sensible objects, than when these Societies were unknown in the annals of the Church? The decided interest which they take in such institutions, and the moral advantages which they derive from their own exertions in extending their practical operations, demonstrate that you have one motive to impart religious instruction, of which the righteous in every preceding age were destitute.

Animated by these encouragements, proceed, and your success will be an ample

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compensation for your toil. But you must not be impatient nor grow weary. In some cases, just as you are about to communicate to a friend the news of your child's conversion, a sudden change may take place in his habits and propensities. Such an occurrence, destructive to your expectations, will call into exercise your faith, but do not despair. These transient impressions often precede those of a more permanent nature. The disappointment may be designed, by infinite wisdom, to excite your more ardent importunity, and the blessing may be reserved for a season when you will be compelled to acknowledge, in a more distinct manner, the interposition of divine mercy.

A Parent, well known to the Author, felt extremely anxious for the conversion of her son. She had seen him several times deeply affected by the momentous truths of the Scriptures. At length he broke through every restraint, tore himself away from all his connexions, and was resolved to seek his fortune in a distant part of the world. Before he carried the whole of his scheme into execution, his distracted Mother resolved to make another effort to save him from ruin, and after fervently imploring the co-operat-

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ing energy of the Spirit, she hastened to the place of his residence. She met him as he was going to leave his native country for ever. Not knowing his intention, she urged him to visit his home once more. He refused, but her tears prevailed. He went, secretly intending to return and accomplish his purpose. But that grace which had been often abused, prevented. On the following Sabbath, he entered the place which he had been accustomed to attend, he listened to the truths, with which he had been familiar from infancy, but he listened with very different emotions. They came with power. "Old things passed away, and all things became new." Redeemed from the dominion of his evil propensities, and absolved from his accumulated guilt, amidst the rejoicings of the heavenly inhabitants, he was introduced to the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

If a similar event has occurred in your family, give the praise to him to whom it is due. "In vain had your instructions, from day to day, dropped as the rain and distilled as the dew, in the most gentle and insinuating manner; in vain had the precious seed of the word been sown with unwearied diligence, and watered with tears; had he not

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commanded the influences of his Spirit to come down, as a more efficacious rain to water their hearts."

But after all your prayers and exertions, your child is still walking in the broad road that leadeth to destruction. The pleasure which you once anticipated, has not been realized, and you are preparing for an entrance into that state of felicity, from which you expect he will be excluded. This thought is more painful than the horrors of dissolution. In imagination, you behold the tribunal of judgment, you see your child standing speechless on the left hand of the Judge, you hear the final sentence—depart, depart thou accursed, into everlasting fire.

But let not this scene extinguish every ray of hope, and embitter with unutterable woe, your last moments. Leave your child with him who has promised to answer the prayer of faith. His conversion, for which you have been praying for years, may be effected after you are presented faultless before the presence of the Divine glory, and it may be ordained to add fresh relish to the joys of heaven, by awakening the feelings of admiration and gratitude, when no pride or self-complacency will chill their ardor.

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LETTER V.

On the Loss of Children.

IT is appointed unto men once to die. This truth, established by the testimony of your fathers, has received an additional confirmation by an event which has transpired in your own dwelling. Your child is dead. Is this a strange thing which has happened unto you? But few Parents are permitted to rear the whole of their offspring. Some are removed in the days of Infancy or Youth, and others just as they are stepping into situations for which they have been undergoing a long and expensive course of preparation. Such bereavements are seldom anticipated, which makes the shock the more

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violent when it is felt. But there are circumstances, which in your opinion, aggravate your loss. The firstling of your flock is taken. The most engaging member of your family is gone into the land of the enemy. His lovely image rises before your imagination adorned with peculiar graces; the incidents of his short and pleasing history are distinctly remembered—you awake from the reverie and find him absent. You feel yourself deprived of an object which you held more sacred than silver or gold, and suppose that time will not heal the breach which is made in your domestic happiness.

"Why is my child torn from me? I received him with gratitude. I cherished him in the days of infancy. For his welfare I have sacrificed my ease and my health. Woe is me. This is a loss which no one can repair. From this trial I cannot be delivered, unless the dark recesses of the grave be cheered with the light of life."

But though you are deeply affected by the calamity which has befallen you, yet do not conclude that he who works all things after the counsel of his own will, is not actuated by wise and important reasons. He has the

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whole scheme of Providence before him, which you survey only in parts; and preserves the greatest order and harmony amidst those scenes which appear to you involved in mystic darkness and confusion. Many reasons which determine his procedure are wisely concealed, but some on calm investigation, will be discovered.

In the loss which you are now deploring, you may trace marks of affection. By removing your child, he has rescued him from the various evils to which we are all exposed, and suddenly prepared him for that unchanging bliss which is withheld from others, till they are made perfect by sufferings. Unwilling that the object of his choice should suffer the diseases of infancy, the weariness attendant on a progressive course of mental improvement, the internal conflict which is perpetuated between the flesh and the spirit, the sorrow of the world which worketh death, or the infirmities of old age, he has shortened the ordinary term of mortal existence and received him into his own immediate presence. There the song of Moses and the Lamb is sung in strains unknown to us, and the scenery

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around him excites an order of enraptured feeling peculiar to the heavenly world. Do you wish those gates, through which he has passed to the realms of immortality, to re-open for his expulsion? Can you charge the Redeemer with unkindness for placing the victor's crown on his head at such an early period of his being? Impossible! Arise and imitate the example of the King of Israel, who after his child was dead, "arose from the earth, and washed and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they sat bread before him, and he did eat. Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? Thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

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This bereavement may be designed to prevent keener anguish at a future period. If an early grave had been opened for Nadab and Abihu, their venerable Father might have wept over their premature death, but the prospect of seeing them minister before the Lord in the *heavenly temple*, would have reconciled him to the affliction. This privilege was denied him. For offering strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not, "there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them; and they died before the Lord." With what emotions did he gather up their ashes, or anticipate the day of final retribution. Unhappy Father, doomed to witness thy two sons cut off from the land of the living by the judgments of heaven. What is the loss of children in infancy and falling by the stroke of nature compared to this?

If that lovely girl who now lies silent in the tomb, had been spared, she might have become the innocent occasion of future trouble. Formed for society, she might have been left a widow in early life, or involved in complicated misery, by the rashness or inadvertency of her domestic companion, like

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Naomi, she might have traced back her steps to the place of her nativity, poor and unpitied.

That youth, who bid fair to perpetuate your name to remote generations, if preserved, might have brought your grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. After having received his portion of goods, like the Prodigal, he might have left your abode, and spent his substance, in riotous living. He might have been driven into exile, and compelled to drag out a miserable existence, where the voice of freedom is never heard. Your imagination may place him in a more perilous situation. In the field of blood he might have received a mortal wound—Left amidst the trampling of the horses, and the roaring of the cannon, to expire alone. There, no maternal hand is present to wipe off the cold sweats of death, no endeared sister is near to perform the last office of kindness to a dying brother. No Minister of mercy dares approach, to cheer him with the consolations of the Gospel.

> Yet you mourn the blighted bloom;
> Weep its premature decay;
> Think it sad to fade so soon,
> Smile and languish in a day.

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If you could their future know,
Learn their dangers or alloy;
Then might streams of murmuring woe
Rise to springs of grateful joy.

They are tenderly reserv'd,
Shelter'd in some friendly tomb,
By indulgent Heav'n preserv'd,
To escape severer doom.

May not this affliction, with which you are now visited be intended to convince you of the necessity of personal religion? The difficulties and trials, to which you have been exposed in your secular pursuits, have been borne with comparative ease, but now the hand of God has touched you, you feel your weakness. Neither the sympathy of friends, nor the claims of business, can assuage your grief. "This is one of those great occasions which force the mind to take refuge in religion; when you have no help in yourself, what can remain, but that you look up to a higher and a greater power? Surely there is no one, who thus afflicted, does not seek succor in the Gospel, which has brought life and immortality to light. The precepts of philosophy may dispose you to conceal your distress, but they cannot remove it. Real alleviation of the loss of children and rational

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tranquillity in the prospect of your own dissolution, can be received only from Him in whose hands are life and death, and from assurance of another state, in which all tears will be wiped from the eyes, and the whole soul shall be filled with joy."

"In health and ease, ingenious speculations may amuse and satisfy you; but you now feel that the desire of your eyes is taken away, your sorrow is too deep to be alleviated by the mere Orator or Philosopher, from whom you would turn in disgust. I faint, says the wounded soul: I want an Almighty arm to lean on now; yea, a very tender and compassionate one, like that of the Son of Man. I need a merciful and faithful High Priest, who having been tempted, knows how to succor the tempted; that Man of sorrows, that Brother born for adversity, who, being acquainted with grief, can enter into my case, and commune with me in all the peculiarities of my distress. I now need one who can speak to me with his own voice, *Weep not, the child is not dead, but sleepeth.* It is true, that this is the land of death, but *I am the resurrection and the life;* this is indeed a *dry and thirsty land, where*

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no weiter is; but I will send you to *fountains of living waters:* I will *wipe away all tears from your eyes.*"

You are ready perhaps to say, 'O that I knew where to find him.' When surrounded by my comforts, enjoying the smiles of prosperity, I shunned and disregarded him, and can I presume to hope that he will now listen to my supplications? Yes, you may—Has he not said, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee; and thou shalt glorify me!" Retire from your family, and pray to your Father in secret that this affliction, which has convinced you of the necessity of religion, may be employed as the means of your obtaining it.

Encourage those reflections which are calculated to increase your devotional ardor. "Have I sinned away my mercy?—Is my child taken as a punishment for my transgressions?—Was his removal necessary to bring me to repentance?—Did I love him better than the Savior?" Meditate on the design for which afflictions are sent. "Have ye forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor

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faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

This bereavement may be designed to teach you the necessity of paying proper attention to the spiritual welfare of your children. While your child was living, the whole, or the greater part of your attention was directed towards his present improvement, and his future settlement in life. Your plans

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were laid, and the various events of providence made subservient to their accomplishment. Your expectations were sanguine, and the pleasure which the *prospect* afforded, compensated for your toil and anxiety. But your views were bounded by time. You cannot dwell with pleasing recollection on seasons spent in training his mind for the employments of the celestial world. This embitters your sorrow, and though you indulge the hope that he is mingling his praises with the redeemed, yet you are conscious of a sinful remissness in your duty.

"Humble yourself deeply before God under a sense of your past neglects, and learn your future duty. You may probably say, Oh that it were possible my child could be restored to me again! How diligently would I attempt to supply my former deficiencies! Unprofitable wish! yet it may be improved for the good of surviving children. How should you express your affection for them? Not by indulging their evil propensities, nor by treasuring up wealth for them, but by endeavoring to form them to an early inquiry after God, and Christ, and heaven, and a love for real goodness, in all the

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forms of it, which may come within their observation."

The uncertainty of your life, as well as theirs, should induce you to attend immediately, not only to their spiritual welfare but your own. Your habitation, lately the abode of domestic joy, is now become the house of mourning. Your child is taken off in the spring of his days, and gone to take possession of the sepulchre. Will he dwell there a solitary individual? No. You may adopt the language of Job, and thus address the common enemy, "I know thou wilt bring me to the grave." In a few years, or months, another funeral procession may depart from your dwelling, and the surviving members of your family may deposit your remains beside those of your deceased child. Are you prepared for such an event? Can you exult in prospect of your final state of existence? Could you, at a moment's warning, enter the dark valley of the shadow of death, in full and certain hope of a joyful resurrection to eternal life?

This bereavement may be designed to revive those religious impressions which the world has nearly effaced, and to produce a more determined consecration of the affec-

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tions to God. Said a celebrated pleader,* when referring to his belief of the truths of the Scriptures, "it forms at this moment the great consolation of a life, which as a shadow passes away, and without it I should consider my long course of health and prosperity, (too long, perhaps, and too uninterrupted to be good for any man,) only as the dust which the wind scatters, and rather a snare than a blessing."

The pernicious influence of prosperity is universally admitted. It obscures those prospects which are afar off, chills the ardor of devotion, secularizes the general frame of the mind, produces a disinclination to self-inspection, and though it cannot destroy the principle of grace, yet it materially weakens its energy and checks its growth. The moral apathy which usually accompanies it, renders the most pointed and touching appeals of the pulpit nugatory. Even if an extraordinary force be employed to rouse the dormant attention of the mind to its spiritual interests, and produce alarm and dejection, yet from the press of business and the crowd of visitors, it soon falls back to its former state of indifference. "My people are bent

* Lord Erskine.

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to backsliding from me." How shall they be recovered? He "visits their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquities with stripes." The scene of his providence is reversed, that the "pleasant things" which are laid waste may again flourish. The evils occasioned by prosperity must be destroyed by adversity. The sacred enjoyments which have been lost amidst the din of worldly pursuits, must be recovered in the house of mourning. Retrace your religious history. Recal to your remembrance the day of your espousal to Christ, the serenity and the enraptured feeling which you then enjoyed, the indifference with which you looked on the allurements of the world, the zeal which you displayed, the solemnity and delight with which you celebrated the death of Jesus. Of joys that are past, how pleasing the remembrance; but if they can never be recalled, how painful. Are yours fled for ever, and after having tasted that the Lord is gracious, must you abandon yourself to despair? No. A mysterious providence has now disturbed your spiritual slumber, and commanded you to prepare for the Bridegroom's voice. With tears of sorrow which you are shedding over your beloved child,

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mingle those of gratitude, that mercy is rejoicing over judgment.

Your backslidings may reprove you, but they should not discourage you. The kind Intercessor, "who loves, and pleads, and prays," has compassion, not only on the ignorant, but on those who are out of the way. He will restore unto you the joy of his salvation, and though your harp of praise may not immediately sound so sweet, so loud, as in former times; yet

It's strung and tun'd for endless years.

In future life you will review the melancholy incidents of your present calamity, and say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted. Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept thy word."

This bereavement may be intended to exalt your character by calling into exercise your religious principles. "No affliction for the present is joyous but grievous." It mortifies pride, disappoints the expectations which have been formed, deranges the harmony of preconcerted plans, and pierces the heart with many sorrows. In the calamities with which we are usually exercised, there is so much blame justly attached to the imprudence, the treachery, and the injustice of

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others, that we are not always aware of the impropriety of the anger, or the resentment which we feel. It is only by a progressive mode of reasoning that we are led to recognize an invisible agency, directing the operation of these means, to remind us that this is not our rest. But in the loss of children, the finger of God is visible.

In reference to such an event, the language of David should be uttered—"I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." You may weep over the lifeless body, without offering violence to your christian principles, but to indulge a dissatisfied spirit is dishonorable to the Divine character, and will prove injurious to your own peace. It virtually impeaches the wisdom and equity of his conduct, and by inflaming the passions, it will incapacitate you for receiving the consolations of religion. It will be useless, for "tears will not water the lovely plant so as to cause it to grow again; sighs will not give it new birth; nor can you furnish it with life and spirits by the waste of your own!" When Aaron lost his two sons, he held his peace. Job said, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord." Who

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has bereaved you of your child? The Lord hath done it. For what purpose? To present him faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy? When you deposited the precious remains in the silent tomb, did you extinguish the hope of another interview? "I would not have you to be ignorant, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

THE END.

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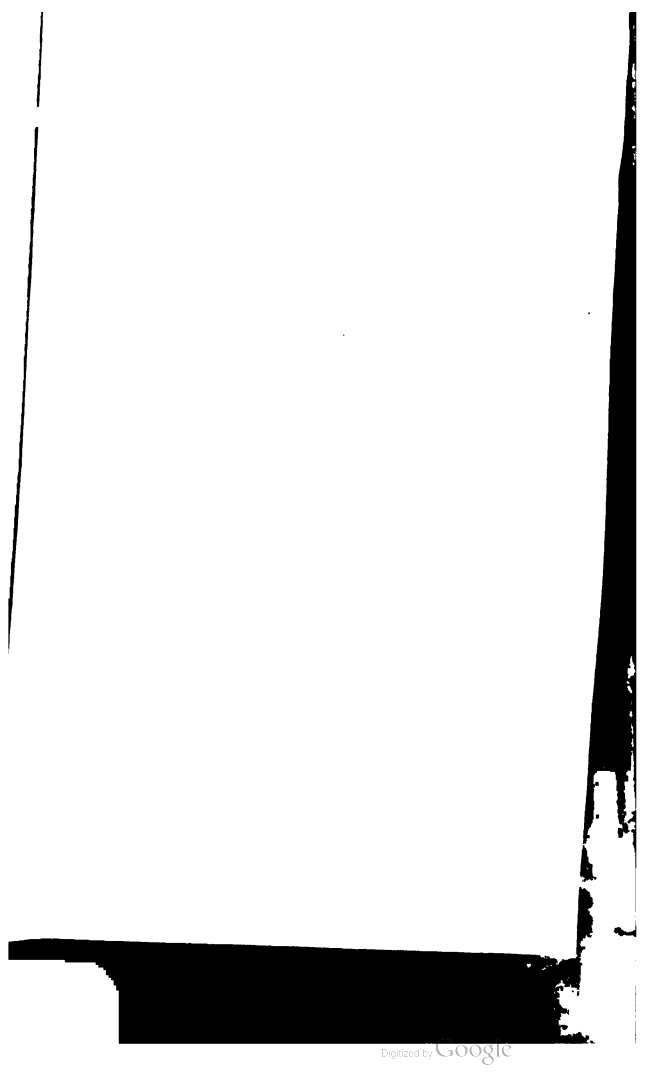
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The memoirs of the late Miss Emma Humphries

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